

CHARLES II AND MADAME CARWELL

By the same Author :

MOLTEN EMBER
THE VOICE OF ONE
THE LADY AND THE MUTE
STRICKEN GODS
THE BULL CALF
VICARAGE PARTY
PEACOCK'S FEATHERS
TENDERNESS



Pierre Mignard

THE DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH
By Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

CHARLES II
AND
MADAME CARWELL

By
JOHN LINDSEY

With 16 Illustrations



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TO
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
WITH LOVE

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CHARLES II AND MADAME CARWELL

CHAPTER I

THE CURTAIN RISES

I

IT was raining. For days the carriage and four weary horses had been travelling. Each night they had rested on their way, now at the château of some nobleman with whom the Comte de Kéroualle could claim acquaintance; twice in inns that were no better than leaky huts and once at the Guest House of the Convent de la Paix. They had been lost. Missing the turning on the atrocious and scarcely marked roads, they had borne too far to the east and found themselves in some village whose name Louise could never afterwards remember, save that the people were rough and noisy, speaking some patois that she did not understand and offering her little help to put her on the right road again.

And it had rained all the time. Ever since her father had fetched her from Quiniper, where her gay doings had so shocked the ladies of the town, the rain had been unceasing, blowing in on her through the open sides of the carriage—for de Kéroualle was not one of those who could afford a “glass coach”—wetting her to the skin, so that, had not her brother, Sebastian, been with her,

and had she not had that image of the place whither she was going ever before her, she must have broken down and wept from the sheer misery of it all.

But Sebastian had made her forget all that. He had talked and laughed, making light of the inconveniences and discomfort, just as he had done in the old days when they had been at Guiler together, telling her of the great things they would do in Paris, and how he had heard that their aunt, the Comtesse, whom neither of them had yet seen, was often at Court, wearing the latest dresses—the hats big as cartwheels that the country people thought so amazing—driving in her carriage when the Maids of Honour or Madame, the Duchess of Orleans, or even the Queen herself went abroad; of the mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, the fame of which had gone out in the world, so that in one summer alone four thousand of them had been sold to England; of the fans and petticoats and the new-fashioned sedan chairs and the dainty silver brushes that people were using for cleaning their teeth.

Was it not a fact, too, that only last year the King of England, that wild and romantic figure, who had wandered homeless for many years till his country had begged him to return, had written to Madame, his sister, asking her to send him some gold sealing-wax as there was none to be had in England?

Louise listened while the coach lumbered on and the rain swept in at the sides and the afternoon waned and the only sounds were Sebastian's voice and the clot, clot, clot of the horses' feet.

She was eighteen. She was small and dark, with a wistful, childish face that men were to find irresistible, passing over the sharp, jutting chin and the right eye with its slight cast and the thin, hard mouth. She had been born in Brittany, in the family home set amid its trees that stretched, uninterrupted, the six miles down to the sea, where

de Kéroualles had lived since 1330 when the Bishop of Leon had given the château to Jeanne, who had founded the line.

The château was a pleasant place, but lately things had not been too easy there. Land did not pay. There was heavy taxation. Her father's tenants, who spent half the year farming and the other half fishing in the treacherous seas, were always in difficulties. Instead of helping the Seigneur to live, they came to him for help. They had no food. They needed new nets. Taxation increased.

In the year that Louise was fifteen the crops had failed. The year after that there were no fish in the sea and the girl had watched her mother's beauty fade and her father grow irritable and short-tempered, and the château fall into neglect.

She had rebelled against it.

Savagely, hating the very idea of poverty, she had planned how she would escape. She felt no sympathy for her parents. They were of the last generation. They had lived their lives before the time of the glory of le Roi Soleil. The château was theirs, but it was not for her nor Sebastian. The brother and sister had talked it over together. They had—for he was the only person she ever loved in her home—planned what they would do, so that their lives should not be bounded, as the lives of the thirteen generations before them had been, by the oaks and the fishermen's huts and the waving crops of Brittany.

They had told each other of the gossip they had heard of Paris, of the masques and balls, and how, if you were presentable but had no money, there were others like you who had had all the world to fight and still had conquered.

Had not the second lady in France, Madame herself, been a penniless, wandering exile, yet now

she lived at Court in a style equal to that of the Queen?

The rain still beat in at the sides of the coach. Each huddled in a corner out of the way of the wet. Louise thought of the letter she had written to her aunt, begging her aid, telling her how, once in Paris, she would make all their fortunes: "And if I get me not a husband before I am twenty, I will retire to a nunnery and spend the rest of my time in mortification of my flesh that men found it so unseemly." She never got her husband; but the Comtesse was hardly likely to insist on her entering a convent when, by the age Louise had mentioned, she was the mistress of a king and that king the beloved brother of Louis XIV's own sister-in-law.

The rain stopped. Suddenly, as though even the elements knew that the girl huddled in the corner of the carriage had come to her destiny, the sun shone through the clouds. The tired men on the box whipped up their horses. The roads, that had for so long been only tracks, now became metalled surfaces.

In the distance the roofs and spires reflected the sunlight. Carriages leaving the city met them. A man trudged past leading a tame, blind bear. Louise clapped her hands. "A bear! Sebastian, see! It is Paris at last."

She leaned forward out of the open shutter of the carriage, her eyes shining, her heart beating high with excitement, watching everything, noticing the people they passed in the road, how even the simple folk wore clothes that were smarter than hers. She frowned for a minute. But it did not matter. To-morrow she would get new clothes. She would find a husband. In Paris the world came to life. All things were possible. She might—she almost smiled to herself at the fancy—she might even see the King himself.

They reached the gates of the city. The echo of the horses' feet was louder on the cobbles. A host of beggars rushed to the open shutters of the carriage, crying for alms, exhibiting their sores and emaciated bodies, while Louise shrank back, delicate, frightened, affronted, and Sebastian swore, and the coachman whipped off the suppliants as though they had been so many dogs.

They left the beggars behind. The mud-splattered carriage rolled on, bearing Louise into the heart of the sun-splashed city; to the Courts of Madame and Louis XIV and, later, across that boisterous, turbulent Channel to a place called Whitehall, the very name of which she did not yet know, where a dark, swarthy man with a lined face and a passion for music was to retreat to her apartments from the tongues of her rivals, the persecution of his parliaments, the eternal striving for money and the noise of his laughing, bickering chattering Court.

II

The date at which Louise's aunt, the Comtesse de Kéroualle, first came to Paris is not known. She appears, at any rate, to have left the château before Guillaume, her brother, was married, for there still exists a letter written by her from Paris, in 1646, to her sister-in-law, in which she speaks lovingly of "Kerouzalle" and the avenue of oaks and "My garden of herbs that I have not seen these three years." As Guillaume married Marie de Ploenc in the early part of 1645 it seems fair to assume that his sister left home to make way for the bride and that "I have not seen my garden these three years" was surely something of a complaint and a lament.

At any rate the Comtesse de Kéroualle was still sufficiently on good terms with her brother for him to have arranged that she should receive Louise

into her household and introduce her to the life of the most splendid Court in Europe.

Versailles had only been built a few years when Louise first arrived there. Louis XIV, who had worn the crown of France since his fifth birthday, had never liked Paris. The air, he said, did not agree with him. He was too much hemmed in by the common people. If he went abroad in the streets his eyes and his ears and his nose were assailed by the sights and the sounds and the smells of those who were not of royal or even noble lineage. Besides, in the narrow, tortuous streets, there was not room for the endless processions of the nobles' carriages. The old houses leaned and tottered together. In summer, often enough, there was plague.

Louis cast about for a suitable place to house the Court. He found it at Versailles, which his father had used as a hunting-box, and which the son—determined that nowhere else in the world should there be a Court the equal of his—demolished and then, importing an army of workmen, turned it into the magnificence that the tourists see to-day.

Money was poured out. As the lovely columns and walls were raised men sweated and died under the strain. "We have lost this month twenty-three masons. Seven were crushed by falling works. Six clumsily drowned themselves in the lakes, and of the rest two at least were beaten so that they have not been able to return to their work this last eight days," reported one of the foremen.

Water was lacking at Versailles. At one stage in the building the master masons despaired of ever completing their task, till the King, furious at the delay, gave the order and pipes, some underground and some overhead, were laid for miles, bringing the water to the Royal Palace. Money that was badly needed for other purposes was lavished on

the place. The precious water was used for feeding artificial fountains and lakes. The countryfolk in the villages whence the water was drained died in the summer through drinking out of stagnant ponds ; but the walls of the palace rose higher and higher, till the whole thing was complete and the Court moved out there, with its amazing crew of camp followers ; out-of-work soldiers, middle-aged beauties come, in a last desperate struggle, to the finest Court in the world in the flimsy hope of selling their wares ; painters, playwrights, as Racine and Molière, whose works were always performed at Court before the general public had the chance of seeing them. Priests came to beg for preferment. Nobles came, leaving their estates, to gossip in the *salons*, to wait on the King as he was dressed, to gamble for absurdly high stakes, so that one day the Comte de Croileul, having lost all his money, the jewels he wore and pledged all his credit, gambled away the house where his wife was waiting the birth of their child. The place swarmed with people. From all over the world those who had anything to recommend them and a great many of those who had not, came to Versailles to make their fortunes or be fed and housed free or seek a rich lover or try to persuade some drunken nobleman to finance their ventures.

Hither then, soon after she had reached her aunt's place in Paris, her eyes still dazzled by the sights she had seen, her country clothes discarded and given place to new city wear, came Louise and her brother, Sebastian.

Although Louise did not know it, although on the journey to Paris she had wondered, half-idly, half-incredulously, if she would so much as see the King, the way had already been prepared for her. Her aunt and her parents had been in correspondence. The château and the estates were falling in ruin.

Taxation was crippling owing to the King's plans at Versailles. The Count had written to his sister: "Even here we hear tales of the King's ladies. I have but one daughter; if, however, the King should see aught in her that pleases his eyes, it may be that, through her, the fortunes of our house will once more reach their former state."

So she came to Versailles, dancing in the *salons*, watching the Knights as they jousted¹ in the lists before the Queen's windows, standing at the tables while men gambled away the fortunes their fathers had left them, seeing her face childlike and wistful—in the thousands of mirrors that flashed from every wall in the palace, and learning from girls as young as herself that she had a business in life, that to be a maid about Court meant, if possible, losing her maidenhood.

She was not unwilling. She saw, as she had seen all along, that life was only worth living if it was pleasant. To worry perpetually about money, to have the cares of an estate you could not afford, to concern oneself too much about affairs of honour, these were the fools' way; the way of her father and mother back at Kerouzalle. But she would be calculating. She would be quite cold about it, heartless if need be. . . .

So she planned. But she fell in love. Hitherto she had loved no one save her brother, Sebastian, that laughing, gay person with whom she had shared so much of her early life, whose own early death she was never to forget, so that, as an old woman, "worried, wrinkled and worn out," she told Voltaire, "He was the gayest, brightest person I ever knew save one only."

And perhaps if Louise had not loved Sebastian

¹ In 1662, at the Jousts, the Comte de Sauff carried off all the prizes.

so well it would not have been François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort, whom she now received.

Sebastian had become attached to de Vendôme's house as soon as they arrived in Paris. Probably the way had been paved for him. Saint-Simon suggests it, though he can have had no possible way of knowing except from gossip he had received at third or fourth hand. But, at any rate, while Louise was still at her aunt's, Sebastian was following de Vendôme to Court, drinking hard, swearing hard, casting his eyes at the ladies who flocked round his master, writing to his mother : " I swear that never in the world was there gathered together in one place at one time so splendid a Court," and enjoying every minute of his life after the dull days at home, so that, as soon as Louise arrived, he would have presented her to his master, bidding Louise mind how she behaved, for M. de Vendôme was used only to the best, the ladies of the Court and, as some whispered, even those of the blood royal.

He need not have worried. From the first they seemed destined together. Louise and the Duc struck some common chord, he so sophisticated, with the marks of a middle-aged roué upon him already, with a wife neglected at home or hovering like a bird with a broken wing round the Queen's apartments : she dazzled, excited, her childish face awed by the splendour of palace and clothing and the money that was thrown about like rice at a wedding and the endless gaiety.

They had something in common—a kind of determination that they would get the most out of life ; that, whoever else sank, they would swim ; that, so long as they managed, the rest of the world could go to the wall.

They danced together. The Duc took her into the gaming-rooms ; found her a seat at the tables,

threw money on for her—his money, not hers—doubled it, doubled it again and, when she declared she could carry no more, sent for his men to bring a sedan chair to take both money and lady home. She became his mistress, having him establish her in her own apartments somewhere on the outskirts of Versailles where he visited her daily, fetching her to the Court and coming home with her late at night, their sedan chairs moving side by side, the lights from the flares of their linkmen throwing weird shadows on the path while, behind them, de Vendôme's past mistresses muttered together, nodding, winking at one another over the plight in which the poor fool—some already called her *La Belle Bretonne*—would soon find herself.

But de Vendôme loved her. He, with a rare delicacy in him, had insisted on her apartments being out of Versailles, lest tongues should wag ; only, with the ardour of a lover, to draw the attention of all eyes with his comings and goings, his neglect of his duties at Court ; his heedlessness of the remarks made to him.

There came a day when it seemed he was tired of Louise.

A fleet was being fitted out to attack the Turks in Candia. It was not a real war, only one of those undangerous, picturesque outings on which in the past de Vendôme and men of his kidney had loved to venture. It had seemed he had forgotten that part of life. All summer he had played with Louise. They had danced and laughed. They had watched the peacocks and swans in the gardens. They had gambled and loved.

In August he announced his intention of leaving. Versailles was amazed. His wife—who had scarce seen him for months—wept as she thought of quite imaginary dangers. The King's sister-in-law, Madame of France, the Minette whom Charles II

loved so dearly, was heard to ask : " But La Belle Bretome ? Poor child, she has been so happy."

But if Minette thought kindly of Louise, no one else did. The rest of the Court was delighted. She was about to lose her lover. She would no longer be the most talked of woman at Court. She would no longer have her apartments, her negro boys to wait on her, her sedan chair. She would revert to what she had been, the penniless daughter of an old soldier. They watched her as the time for her lover's departure approached. She and Vendôme were seen everywhere together. They danced the last night before he set out, never leaving each other, though the Duchess was present and even Sebastian was worried.

The ladies of the Court watched them angrily, maliciously, comforting themselves that this was the last night and that to-morrow . . . But the next morning Louise did not appear. Her apartments were closed and an astounded, dumbfounded Court learned that she had left with de Vendôme, dressed as his page.

She was not yet nineteen.

III

She was back in a few months. The gossips had, after all, been right. De Vendôme had tired of her. The close quarters at which they had lived during the campaign against the Turks had destroyed all illusions ; and the Duc, who, in each mistress, wanted something elusive, unattainable, had, all too soon, grown weary of the " childlike " face, the pouting lips and the hands that, childlike as the face, wanted to stretch out and take all the world.

Louise had grown weary too. Heaven knows she was never to whitewash herself, but, at any

rate, she was fastidious and de Vendôme's habits were not of the cleanest nor, on board ship, had he even troubled to make use of what small decencies there were available. Besides Louise wanted something better.

With de Vendôme, as soon as the first wild infatuation was over, she had seen the impossibility of her ever becoming a person of importance. She realized that—and the realization was bitter—she was only the last in a series of mistresses. And, even so, she was not and never could be the most important. They returned to Versailles separately. If the gossips had expected to see Louise discomfited they were disappointed. With her brother, Sebastian, she appeared at Court. She danced as gaily as ever. Her dresses were as magnificent. Her apartments, that had been closed during her absence, opened again with new decorations, with fifteen mirrors in the large *salon* and a new staircase built entirely of marble.

Sebastian too was a more imposing figure than before. Now he had been appointed a naval captain and the Court was informed that his ship had been the flagship that had led de Vendôme's party. As there seemed no hope of a place near the Queen Louise had the good sense not to angle for one. She realized, with a rare shrewdness, that her unimportance was such that to beg for preferment would only draw attention to it.

She waited. She had, somehow, contrived to get hold of a little money, enough to keep herself for a few months, until someone else appeared to take the responsibility off her shoulders. And meanwhile she kept her eyes open. She was always before the King.

In October, 1668, her aunt wrote to de Kéroualle, her father: "It seems that the King is taken with Louise. He has spent much time in her company, talking and laughing." The Comte's heart must

have beat faster when he read that news. Already he must have envisaged the return of his prosperity, the lifting of his taxes, the rebuilding of his stables that had, for so long, been in need of repair.

But Louis was satisfied with "talking and laughing." Before Christmas, instead of an appointment in the Queen's household, Louise had joined the Duchesse d'Orleans, sister of King Charles II of England and sister-in-law of the French King, as one of her Maids of Honour. It was a minor triumph. It was not what her parents had hoped for. Probably, it was not what Louise herself wanted; but, at any rate, she must make the best of it. Madame was as important as the Queen. Louis himself had openly lamented that he had not married her instead of his dull, complaining Maria Theresa. And if, from now on, Louise's chances of seeing the King daily were not so good as before, there were still plenty of opportunities and her reputation had grown, so that men flocked to her, bearing her presents, offering her protection and trying to persuade her away from her place with the Duchess.

But she would have none of them. Just as, later, she was to love Minette's brother and remain, for years, faithful to him, so now Louise was devoted to the sister to whom Charles wrote so tenderly: "For God's sake, my dearest sister, have a care of yourself and believe me that I am more concerned in your health than I am in my own, which I hope you do me justice to be confident of since you know how much I love you. . . . I am sure I shall be very impatient till I have the happiness to see *ma chère* Minette again."

Already in 1662 Minette had sent Charles one protégée, Frances Stewart,¹ "the prettiest girl in

¹ Her portrait is still to be seen on the reverse side of every copper coin struck in the realm.

the world," to be Maid of Honour to Catherine of Braganza. Charles was delighted with her, for her beauty and childlike simplicity. At the first Court Ball she attended in Whitehall she was the only one for whom he had eyes. And it was certainly not the wish of the King that his friendship with her remained only friendship.

It seemed that the time had now come for another to follow her. In the last weeks of 1667 England, that eternal problem in the schemes of Louis XIV, terrified by a nightmare of a Franco-Dutch partition of the Spanish Empire that would establish France without a rival on land and, far worse, Holland without one at sea, had entered into an alliance with the Dutch. At the end of December Charles despatched the enthusiastic William Temple to The Hague to sound De Witt as to the likelihood of an Anglo-Dutch Alliance for the protection of Belgium or a league to enforce Franco-Spanish Peace. Holland, already alarmed by French victories, accepted the second proposition. By January 18th a treaty had been signed binding England and Holland to secure peace between France and Spain, and, should occasion arise, enforce it.¹

In April, however, there came the pacification of all of Europe that mattered at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which was later strengthened through the addition of Sweden into the Triple Alliance. Charles had forced the issue. By his overtures to De Witt he had scored a real diplomatic triumph. Apart altogether from fulfilling his nuptial obligations to Catherine of Braganza by securing a Spanish recognition of Portuguese independence, Charles had proved to Louis and the rest of Europe that English friendship was worth paying for and he had re-established his honour in the eyes of his own subjects.¹ As Arlington wrote: "God be thanked

¹ Bryani.

it is and that both the world at home and abroad understand it to be honourable and safe for His Majesty." Louis was alarmed. His dream of a mighty European Empire administered from Versailles had received a set-back. At the very time that Louise de Kéroualle had first appeared at his Court he was wracking his brain for some scheme whereby he could force the English King to keep the peace of Europe and, if possible, ally himself with France on the religious issue.

He was helped in two ways. For one thing he had with him daily the one person whom Charles, despite his eternal "affairs," did truly love, the little sister to whom he wrote every Sunday, "lest you should quite forget that there is such a tongue as the English language." For another, Charles was badly in debt. His parliaments--parsimonious for the whole twenty-five years of his reign--refused him supplies. The wages of the army were three years in arrears. Those of his household servants at least five.

Perhaps, if Louis had not had another mission for Louise, she would have remained at Versailles, entering the royal seraglio and never crossing the turbulent Channel to do battle with Nell Gwynn and the stormy, lovely Hortense Mancini.

As it was, while Minette was writing to Charles and she and Louis were meeting day after day to discuss their plans, the way was being laid for Louise and, in Whitehall, Charles was listening to the whispered suggestions of a certain Italian astrologer, Pregnani, sent by Minette who, by infallible signs, proclaimed the doom of the Stuarts, unless Charles was willing to join the cause of Louis.

At first Charles listened. Lady Castlemaine was impressed. But the test came at Newmarket when the horse Pregnani had foretold would win came last in the race and Charles wrote to his sister :

"I give little credit to such kind of cattle. I believe he will give you some account of it; but not that he lost his money upon confidence the stars could tell which horse would win, for he had the ill luck to foretell three times wrong together."

But, although Pregnani was discredited, the plan appealed to Charles. His need of money was desperate and, ever at heart a Catholic, he realized that his staunchest friends were the English Catholics. Besides, only in 1666, the Dutch had sailed up the Medway, burning the English ships and thus inflicting an insult that, it seemed, could never be wiped out. Peace with Holland and world commerce for England seemed hardly compatible.

So at first he asked £800,000 to sustain the alliance with Louis and another £200,000 to precede his conversion to Catholicism. In return for these he was to connive at Louis' accession to the Spanish throne when the present holder should die, receiving in return the South American Colonies, Minorca and Ostend.

In March, 1669, Lord Arundel arrived at Ostend with Charles's amended outlines of the scheme.

In the following May, Louis began making arrangements for a royal progress to Dunkirk. Minette was to travel with him. The households of each would accompany them. At the time of their arrival at Dunkirk the English Fleet would be in mid-Channel. Minette was to beg permission to sail over to England. The treaty was to be signed, thus making Louis' way clear.

But delays followed. The English Ministers entrusted with the secret grew timid. Charles himself was taken ill at Newmarket. And, while the French Court was waiting to move, Louise heard that her brother, Sebastian, had been killed in a drunken brawl in a village inn in Provence.

For a little she was desperate. It seemed that now she had no one to live for. She had lost the only person in life she had ever loved. A Court lady wrote : " I never thought grief could so change her. *La Belle Bretonne* ill becomes her now."

But she roused herself. Frantically, almost as though she were forcing herself to do it, she entered into the wildest life of the Court again. Her behaviour was atrocious. She scandalized everyone.

Two months after her brother's death she was carried home in her sedan chair early in the morning from a drunken night with the Comte de Sault. Nothing now, it seemed, could save her reputation. De Sault was known as one of the least savoury members of the Court, and hitherto Louise had, at least, shown a certain discretion in her affairs.

But in June the Court moved. For weeks past the whole of Versailles had been given over to packing and planning and leave-taking of those who would remain behind. The heavy coaches had been brought out and washed and polished. Harness, long oiled and hung up, was now taken down and rubbed to a perfect brilliance. The ladies vied with one another in the new clothes with which they would startle their provincial cousins. There were squabbles and bickerings. There was senseless envy and competition. But at last the last powder-puff was packed, the last wig was crimped, the last patch applied to some querulous woman's face and, while the Royal band played, the great, lumbering coaches, each drawn by six or eight horses, left Versailles to the complaints of overworked servants, the screaming of peacocks on the lawns and the ministrations of builders and repairers and cleaners.

In one of the carriages that followed the coach of Madame of France, unawares leaving her country for practically the rest of her life, setting out on

the road that was to join her destiny with that of the Stuart King, laughing with her companions, rumbling over the uneven roads of the French countryside, her large hat stared at by the curious and the ignorant, rode La Belle Bretonne who had, only so few months ago, entered Paris, the daughter of a poverty-stricken ex-soldier.

Her Odyssey had begun.

CHAPTER II

MADAME OF FRANCE

MEANWHILE in England, Charles, harassed as ever by debt, was governing the country with the aid of the Cabal Ministry and working steadily on the terms of the secret treaty with Louis. It was bound to be secret. The minds of Englishmen would never have tolerated a King subsidised by France, though the Ever Faithful Commons regularly voted Charles supplies and, as regularly, saw that it was impossible for him to collect them. The rule of the Commonwealth, the Protector's Foreign Policy, the Standing Army and the late Civil Wars had left the country deeply in debt.

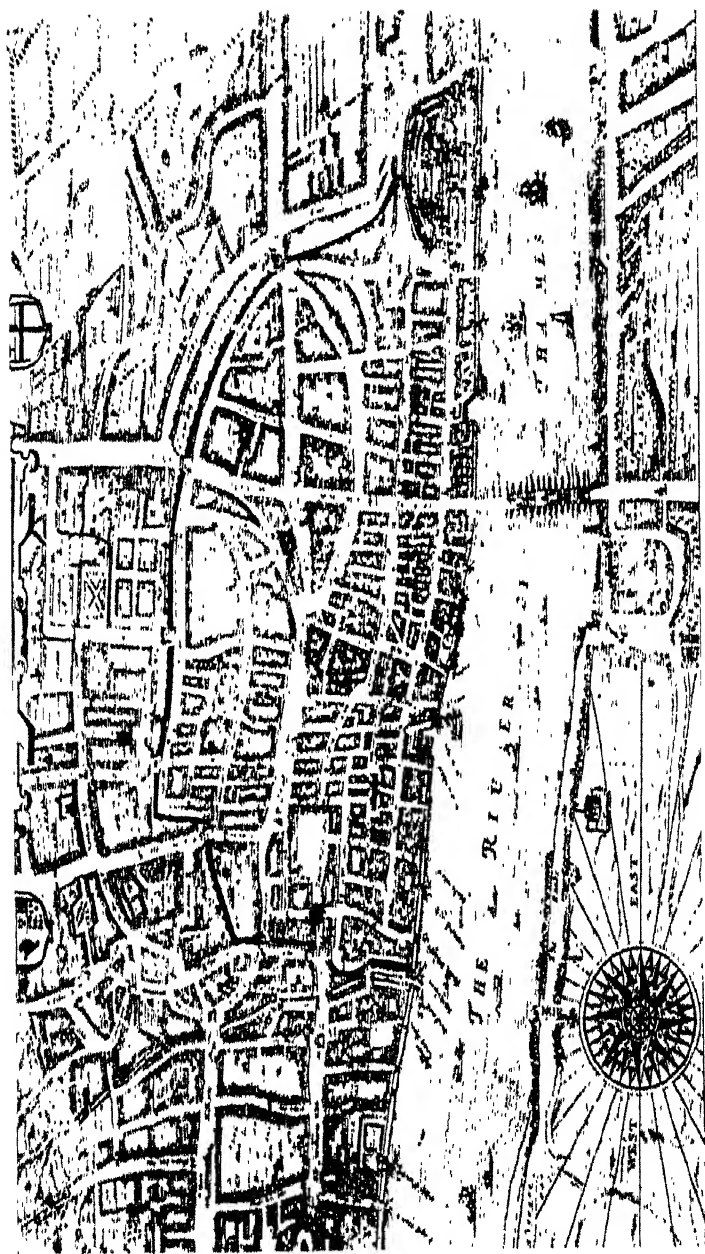
To two members of the Cabal—Buckingham and Arlington—Charles talked openly of the treaty. But the other three, in particular the rabidly Protestant Earl of Shaftesbury, while knowing that there was a treaty and even the nature of some of the terms, were of necessity kept uninformed of the proposal that the King should declare himself a Catholic. Had this been known it was certain that Charles would have been forced to go on his travels again, and the country thrown into all the disorder and confusion of an uncertain succession.

But Buckingham and Arlington he trusted; though even while he was trusting them, telling them his plannings and schemings, Arlington was secretly in the pay of Spain, for, as Colbert de Croissy, the French Ambassador, wrote to his

master : "Arlington is fond of luxury and amusement. If he were in less close relations with Spain he would have to live sparingly."

Louis, however, was determined to have Arlington's support. The King of England, he decided, must be persuaded not by Frenchmen, but by his own Ministers. At present he was delaying too much, never certain that, at the root of the matter, there was not some trap whereby Louis would be in a position to dictate terms absolutely and he, Charles, would have no option but to obey. The Marquis de Ruvigny, approached by Louis, replied that "Arlington would sell his soul to the devil to worst an enemy," and suggested that the negotiations be conducted through Leyton and Williamson, the agents of the Earl of Arlington.

The plan appealed to the French King. With his inflated opinion of the idea of kingship, he always found it difficult to deal with his equals. A king was above men. There was a decency to be observed in approaching him, just as there was an indecency in the idea of a king selling his country's policy that his country might still exist as a country at all. The French and the English methods of kingship were as the poles apart, for, while Louis must protect himself from the sight and the sound and the smell of the common people, while he was majestically and actually unaware in himself of the existence of poverty, Charles consorted with all men, not afraid that he would be smirched with contact with the lowest. He laughed and rejoiced with his subjects. He went about openly and unattended. He would eat in a pot-house and drink with a waggoner and take to his bed a woman who had sold oranges, strong waters and her body in a London brothel. Because he knew men as Louis never knew them. He had ever before him the memory of that six weeks' hiding in the secret



MAP OF LONDON IN CHARLES II'S TIME
By courtesy of the British Museum.

places of his subjects' houses ; of the kiss an old butler, recognizing him in the servant of Jane Lane, planted on his hand ; of the forty odd men and women who, despite the reward of £1000 offered for his body and knowing him to be the King, had yet kept their peace, telling no man.

And it was for these people—the loyal, common people of his country—that Charles was now selling his honour and his integrity. But he would sell them at his own price. He delayed. He hesitated. He laughed at the prognostications of Pregnani. And he showed himself to be the most able diplomat in Europe.

Meanwhile Louis, in Versailles, grew more and more impatient, writing endlessly to de Croissy, sending spy after spy, attacking the King in the private places of his house, in the domestic servants of his own household. In one summer he sent Queen Catherine a milliner, Mme Desparde. A month later he sent Charles a wine merchant, M. de Pontac. He was corresponding endlessly with the Marquis du Ruvigny. Even St. Evremond, who had been exiled after the Battle of the Pyrenees and had settled in London, was consulted as to Charles's thoughts and the probable direction of his actions. Whitehall was filled with French spies and the King went, laughing, among them.

Leyton and Williamson, however, appeared to Louis a new line of attack and, accordingly, he wrote to de Croissy : "Leyton for Buckingham and Williamson for Arlington, his master, try to make you believe they can soon bring about a close union between me and the King of England, provided you play into their hands and no longer try to get the Chancellor recalled from exile. Arlington does not act towards me in a way to make me desire the continuance of his influence. You are to make both one and the other think the recall of the said

Chancellor possible or even probable if I support him. If they engage to effect the union between me and their king, you can give all the sureties they ask that I will make use of any means they suggest to block every road by which Cl. can go back. But I see very well that I shall make no real progress so long as I have not gained the Duke and Arlington by forwarding their separate interests. . . . Hints may be held out to Leyton and Williamson that they are to receive some gifts from me. . . . Let me know what sums shall be offered to the Duke and Arlington as well as to their agents. 'The affair is so important that I am willing to make any sacrifice of money, provided that payment of the gross amount is stayed until after the blow is struck.'

De Croissy approached the two agents. Leyton, an avaricious London tradesman, received the bribe. Williamson, more honest, held out. Louis was informed and was filled with impatience again. He wrote at once to de Croissy: "But do not stop at that if more is required. Seeing how irresolute the King of England is, do not neglect to gain Arlington. I would willingly spend on him twenty thousand gold pieces. You must take care not to frighten the King by letting him feel I am trying to draw him into a war with Holland."

But still Williamson refused and Arlington could not be approached. Leyton, however, crossed over to France, bearing with him letters from de Croissy and St. Evremond and assuring Louis of Buckingham's devotion to his cause. But Louis, useful as he found him, was not likely to be taken in by a man of Leyton's calibre. He wrote to de Croissy that he had paid him four hundred pistoles and, in addition: "I like not the smell of the man, but I have treated him to a ring worth four hundred pistoles and have admitted him to converse twice with me."

A little later, on March 27th, 1669, Leyton left

France to be the recipient of a pension, that was regularly paid, of three hundred jacobus. Once back in England the agent visited Samuel Marland, the inventor, who had sold Commonwealth secrets to Charles when in exile. At the Restoration Charles, anxious to reward him, had heaped favours on him. Marland, never satisfied, had asked for more, until Whitehall had nothing further to offer and, discontented, he was ripe for Leyton's suggestion that he should now turn traitor to Charles and sell Louis the secrets of the King's finances. He was himself in desperate straits. His own inventions had failed him. His creditors were pressing him. Charles had told him he could do no more. Now, with an annual pension from Louis, he saw his way clear again, and soon Versailles knew as much about the King of England's affairs as did even Chiffinch, who kept the key to the King's closet and whose wife introduced the young ladies into the King's bedchamber.

Charles was beset. He was surrounded by Louis' spies. He could never be certain that the words he spoke secretly would not be expressed over to Versailles and the treaty—that he was as anxious as Louis to sign—postponed or the price decreased, or, worst of all—some whisper reach the ears of the Faithful Commons.

But still he hesitated. In the March of 1669 he had trouble with Buckingham, who was angry that Madame of France had sent over Pregnani. The Duke was affronted. He had already supposed that Minette intended to govern the King through himself. Was he not near the King's person? Was he not on the King's Council? Had not Minette herself, on her last visit to England, allowed him to make love to her and written him letters and sent him presents?

On March 14th he wrote to Leyton angrily:

"She sends a humbugging astrologer, who flatters himself that I am his dupe in love and in politics and who makes me a laughing-stock for Monmouth and Hamilton."

De Croissy also was worried. The mission of Pregnani seemed indeed to have been an error. Through it it looked as though they would lose even Buckingham after all these months of discussion and preparation. If the Duke took offence everything would be lost; for he was, ultimately, the only member of Charles's Ministry on whom they could rely; and the King was not sufficiently strong to go on alone. He dared not act alone because he knew that, so long as he had his Ministers with him, he had some kind of defence, something behind which he could hide, where he could take cover, as his father had done behind Stratford and his grandfather behind Sir Walter Raleigh. In despair on March 28th de Croissy wrote to Louis, suggesting that Madame herself be sent over: "He shows all the fury of an enterprising gallant who finds himself an object of mirth. Perhaps the best thing to do would be to send over Madame herself to keep alive her brother's tenderness and heal the wounded vanity of Buckingham which may breed hatred where love was."

It was a bold move for an ambassador; but de Croissy knew his business and he knew his suggestion, presumptuous as it was, would be likely to appeal to all parties. But the time was not yet ripe. Royalty cannot be moved without proper formality. The year dragged on. Summer passed at Whitehall and at Versailles. Charles went down to Newmarket, returned to London and passed to Tunbridge Wells. Buckingham was still offended, placing all manner of obstacles in the way of meeting de Croissy, never mentioning the treaty. There was an air of suppressed excitement about.

Something had got to happen, was bound to happen. Things could not continue to drift as they had these past months. But summer gave way to autumn. In Windsor Great Park Charles hunted the hare and the stag. In London Marland blew up his house with one of his inventions. At the Court the Queen conceived "a great belly," but nothing came of it. Buckingham went headlong into an affair with the Countess of Shrewsbury. In the mind of a young man named Newton was conceived the Theory of Light. A blind poet was at work on *Paradise Regained*. Samuel Pepys, an official at the Admiralty, bought himself a new carriage. Lady Castlemaine, the King's mistress, quarrelled with the new favourite, an actress named Nell Gwynn. But the King stayed at Windsor, hunting and planting trees and collecting clocks and having the scientists tell him of their discoveries.

He was at Whitehall for Christmas. De Croissy saw him but had nothing to report. On Boxing Night there was a mask. Tom Killigrew produced *King Lear*. The audience for some unaccountable reason rocked with laughter. It was whispered that Chiffinch had found yet another mistress for his master.

De Croissy grew desperate. On the 29th he wrote to Louis: "It seems that the King of England has put our suggestion from him."

But two days later the world came to life again. Suddenly, on January 2nd, 1670, Charles sent for de Croissy, showing him great signs of favour and walked up and down his picture gallery with that fast pace of his so that the stout little ambassador had to run to keep up with him: and expressed a wish to see his sister again and have talk with her.

That was all. There was no hint of hidden meaning. There was no suggestion that the meeting would have anything to do with the treaty. Charles

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wanted to see and talk to his sister, Minette, whom he loved.

But it was enough for de Croissy. Now he saw the completion of his mission in sight. Charles would not send for Minette on any idle excuse. He might do that to other women. He might do it to his wife; but for his sister he had too much respect. The ambassador hurriedly left the King and returned to his own place. He wrote to Louis that night: "I was greatly surprised at the intimation and I lose no time in sending you an express that this is a case, if ever there was one, when the iron should be hammered while it is hot."

And one still seems able to hear down the years the echoing of the horse's feet as it galloped that night to Dover.

A week later Charles sent for de Croissy again, but this time he did not see him in the public gallery. Chiffinch took him, leading him through the secret passages of the palace which only he and the King and a few women knew, till they reached the closet beside the King's bedchamber. Chiffinch withdrew. Charles was standing in the middle of the room when de Croissy entered. He did not turn. Still without looking at the ambassador, he handed him a document, written in his own hand, for there was no one except Chiffinch--and this was hardly his province--whom he could trust in this final surrender.

The document was months old. It was dated October 4th of the previous year and the preamble ran: "The League between the King of Great Britain and the Most Christian King, shall be so durable that nothing in the world shall henceforth divide Their Majesties. The King of Great Britain, being convinced of the truth of the Catholic Religion, and resolved to declare himself a Catholic, and to be reconciled to the Church of Rome,

believes that, for the fulfilment of this design, the aid of the Most Christian King will be needed."

In addition to the monetary terms of the treaty, however, Charles wanted France to cede to England Minorca, Ostend and the Spanish American Colonies, and war was to be declared on the Republic of Hamburg as it was bound to the United Provinces. De Croissy had already seen the document. He had, indeed, written to Louis on December 19th of the previous year: "The most odious of the clauses is the one binding us to attack Hamburg, without any given motive or plausible excuse. To do so would be foolishly to bring down on our backs the Hanseatic Towns and the Princes of the German Empire."

Charles now indicated to him that these were the only terms he could accept. The ambassador withdrew. Once again Chiffinch guided him through those secret passages away from the King's apartment. In his own place he sat down and composed another letter to Louis, assuring him that Charles was ready and willing to sign; but that Arlington must be blamed for the retention of the objectionable clause. The letter was received in Versailles. Louis and Minette read it and discussed it. On January 29th Madame wrote to Charles that she was shocked and grieved at his demands to attack Hamburg, which had never given any cause of complaint; and that she was sure he was being overruled by Arlington, who must be made to modify his demands. Charles received her letter and replied tenderly, sending her messages of love, telling her that, "Could I but see my dearest Minette's face soon" he was sure they could reach better terms.

By May they had reached the better terms, and on the 15th of that month Arlington himself wrote a letter to Louis, protesting that "The King of

England will not hear of the sums which Your Majesty agrees to let him have in consideration of his change in religion " being payable in Paris.

By this time Louis and his Court were at Dunkirk. The money difficulty was not insuperable. Minette herself drew up a draft treaty and the money was therein made payable in London. With difficulty she obtained leave from her impotent and jealous husband to sail over to England on a visit to the loved brother she had not seen for nine years. Seven days were all that Monsieur would allow. But it was enough. Madame of France took leave of the King and, with the treaty hidden in a safe place, set sail for Dover.

Among her ladies travelled *La Belle Bretonne*.

In mid-Channel the French yacht came up with the English fleet on manoeuvres. The men-of-war turned about, forming an escort for the yacht.

So they rode into Dover Harbour, greeted by the firing of cannon, every house decorated by flags and garlands and the whole populace rejoicing on the quayside that the King's sister had returned. They landed and " in a blaze of pageantry Charles received this beautiful frail Princess, whose flame-like vitality was burning away her life ; and every moment of those few brief days they spent together in an ecstasy of their spiritualized love."¹

To Minette it was the fulfilment of her life's ambition. She saw in the treaty which Charles now signed the sign of the welding together—the marriage—of two great countries : the country of her birth and the country of her adoption. She saw in it the end of troubles with England for her loved brother-in-law. She saw in it the end of monetary troubles with his parliaments for her beloved brother. For a week there was feasting and merriment and happiness while the yacht stood

¹ Wheatley.



P. Lely

LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE
By courtesy of the British Museum.

off in the harbour, ready to take Minette back to France and Monsieur.

But Louis was not unmindful of her. She had made possible the dream of his ambition. So now, on her behalf, he interceded with Monsieur, her husband. On May 31st he was able to write to de Croissy: "I send you this to inform you that my brother has consented to let Madame remain ten or twelve days longer in England. You can exaggerate to King Charles the efforts we make and the points we stretch to be agreeable to him. Let him feel how much he should be obliged to us, so that when we make demands he will be in a humour to yield."

But the few days were all too soon ended and the French ladies prepared to depart. With tears in his eyes, Charles held his sister to him, begging her not to stay away from him for too long, "lest I forget altogether the dear sound of your voice." The cannon fired again. Colbert de Croissy, polished, courteous and human, watched the King as, weeping, he stood on the quayside till the yacht had become no more than a speck on the horizon. Then Charles turned and, climbing into his coach, was driven back to Windsor.

At Dunkirk Monsieur received his wife coldly. He was in a sullen and evil mood. His jealousy had been aroused because his wife had been entrusted with this great diplomatic mission. Minette begged leave to go to Versailles and report to the King. Monsieur refused and, only on receipt of a curt command from Louis, did he at last give consent. As soon as Minette returned he carried her and the children away to St. Cloud.

Three days after their arrival, on June 28th, Minette complained of being in bad health. But there was no special alarm shown as she had always been delicate. It was supposed that the late

excitements had been too much for her. Towards evening, when she was with her ladies, she asked for a glass of chicory water.

It was fetched and the Princess sipped at it. Almost immediately she was seized with the most violent pains and thrown into convulsions. Her ladies ran screaming from the room. A few stayed and laid her on the bed. Her husband was sent for as was also the King. Madame was heard to murmur the word "Poison."

When Monsieur arrived he stood indifferently by the bed and suggested emetics. He showed no signs of emotion at his wife's condition. Soon afterwards the King hurried into the room, tears streaming down his face. He ran to Minette and stood, holding her hand, begging her, for his sake, to be strong and live.

For some hours she lay, groaning yet very patient as the pains gripped her. Presently she sank into a coma. Monsieur crept out of the room; but Louis still stood by the bed, holding her hand and looking down at her. At last a peculiarly savage spasm shook her, so that she was forced out of her coma. She made signs to the King who bent low that he might catch what she had to tell him. He was weeping bitterly. He promised that he would send messages to Charles.

Now the pains grew worse. Her frail body was twisted in her agony until, at last, still whispering her brother's name, Minette died. And the echoes of that whispered word "Poison" crept through the palace.

The next day it was told the King that the Marquis d'Effiat, one of Monsieur's gentlemen, had been seen tampering with the cupboard where Madame's chicory water had been kept. Louis, thoroughly alarmed, sent for Moreil, the Comptroller of the Household, and asked him if he had

heard any story that Madame had been poisoned.

At first the Comptroller hesitated ; whereupon the King asked him directly if he knew who had poisoned Madame.

"The Marquis and myself," he replied. "It was the Chevalier de Lorraine who procured the drug from Rome. Monsieur d'Effiat, with my connivance, put it into the chicory water prepared for Her Royal Highness."

Then the King asked : "Had my brother cognisance of this deed ?"

But Moreil replied that they had not told Monsieur as they dared not trust him.

Immediately all was confusion and alarm. It looked as though the good work that Minette had done would now be all undone. In great haste Louis despatched the Marshal de Bellefond—a great diplomat and well versed in affairs of this kind—to offer his official condolences to Charles.

But Charles would not be appeased. "When is it your King's pleasure that the Chevalier de Lorraine returns to Court," he asked with a rudeness that was entirely foreign to him. De Bellefond's reply was contained in a letter he wrote to Louis on July 10th : "I replied that it was not easy to divine the thoughts of Your Majesty on such a matter and that none of your servants would take the liberty of conversing about it, unless Your Majesty first broached the matter."

But still Charles was not to be appeased. His grief was terrible. It seemed as though all that Minette had striven for, that for which, indeed, she had given her life, was to be lost, unless something was done very quickly. There was one grain of hope. In an interview Charles had graciously given de Bellefond he had mentioned the little Breton girl with the large, childlike eyes, very tenderly, speaking of her as though she were his only link with Minette.

The news was raced by express to Versailles. It was a last hope, the only hope. Louis sent for Louise. She was not easy to find. Now that her mistress was dead there was no place for her at Court. But she *was* found at last and prepared for her mission.

De Bellefond had another audience with Charles. Would it comfort His Majesty to see the Breton lady? She might be able to tell him of Madame, of her last hours, the messages she had left. There was hope there. There was the possibility that perhaps Minette had not quite slipped away; that, from this girl, Charles might hear some new message that he had not yet received. So a yacht was fitted and sent to Dover. At the same time de Croissy wrote: "Must we abandon the great affair? It is to be feared that the grief of the King of England, which is greater than can be imagined, and the malevolent talk and rumours of our enemies will spoil everything."

It seemed, however, that they need not abandon all hope. Louise landed at Dover, attended by her young ladies, whose hats were of such a size that the rough English laughed at them, calling them cartwheels. At Dover Charles, having posted from Whitehall, met her. He wept and asked of his sister, of her death, of the things she had said. He was very tender to the young girl who brought him tidings, vowing that he could not part with her and that she must remain with him to the end of his life.

They journeyed slowly, through an English country-side in summer, to Whitehall. At the beginning of August Louise was appointed Maid of Honour to the Queen. And Bossuet, the French Divine, in his funeral oration over Madame proclaimed: "The worthy link which bound the two greatest Monarchs on earth was broken, but now is soldered

up again. Their noble desires win confidence of their peoples and virtue henceforth shall be the only mediator between them."

It appeared that he was right. On September 15th de Croissy, who had noticed the fascination that Louise exercised over Charles, reported to Louis: "The King is always finding opportunities to talk with this beauty in the Queen's room. But he has not, contrary to what is reported, gone yet to chat with her in her own room, contrary to what is said here."

The tide seemed to have turned. What so short a time ago had seemed hopeless of accomplishment now seemed secure. Louise had as good a head as Minette and she had this added advantage that she, as yet, bore Charles none of the tender love that his sister had borne him. Buckingham, too, who had held out for so long, called on de Croissy on the 10th September, assuring him that, should the French King be willing to pension off his--Buckingham's--uncomfortable mistress, the Countess of Shrewsbury, he would be his obedient servant for ever.

De Croissy promised he would do what he could. Gleelessly he wrote to Louis and received in return a promise from the King that for Buckingham's services, a pension of ten thousand livres should be paid annually to Lady Shrewsbury. And the King of England was daily with Louise. Lady Castlemaine, for so long Charles's mistress, grew frightened for her position. Buckingham and de Croissy were scheming against her. In an interview with Louise the Ambassador warned her against her. All that November Castlemaine worried and badgered Charles to give her preferment. De Croissy encouraged her. The Queen herself begged that she might be given some station that would take her away from the palace.

On the fifth of December she was created Duchess of Cleveland and on the twelfth de Croissy wrote to his master: "I think it safe while undermining that lady, to keep her on our side by appearing to be with her."

He did it so successfully that the new Duchess, convinced that Louise was no real danger, entered into a secret correspondence with the Spanish Ambassador. Yet all that Christmas Louise stayed at the Court, never far from Charles, never causing a scandal.

In the spring of 1671, Charles planned a visit to Euston, Arlington's place, for the Newmarket Races. Buckingham and Arlington were bitterly opposed to one another and hitherto the Duchess of Cleveland had shown herself more favourable to the Duke than to Arlington. Now, however, that she had changed her policy and was angling with Spain, she switched her allegiance to Lady Arlington, whose husband had for so long been in Spanish pay. The Countess, however, had old scores to settle. Too often in the past Cleveland had worsted her and she was not one to forgive. Already she had seen the King's interest in the new Breton Maid of Honour.

So Lady Arlington approached de Croissy with the suggestion that Mademoiselle might enjoy the visit to Euston. De Croissy was delighted. Lately he had been worried that Louise might be forced to hold out too long and the King lose all interest.

Casting discretion to the winds he told Lady Arlington everything, his plans, his hopes, the destiny he had fixed for Louise.

Early in February he wrote to his master: "The snare is set. I doubt not we shall have much to report," while an excited but still strangely level-headed girl was buying new frocks with which to dazzle the Norfolk gentry.

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL LOVER

THERE was a great company at Euston. The house had been purchased by Arlington from Sir Thomas Rookwood a few years earlier and, a fire destroying a great part of it, it had been rebuilt according to the prodigal directions of Lady Arlington.

Evelyn, the diarist, who was one of the guests on this occasion, has left us, in his usual prim and sober style, an account of it as it stood when he stayed there : " His house is a very noble pile, consisting of a fine pavilion after the French, besides a body of a large house, and those not built together, but formed of an addition to an old house (purchased by his Lordship of one Sir T. Rookwood) yet with a vast expanse, made not only capable and room-some, but very magnificent and commodious, as well within as without, nor less splendidly furnished. The staircase is very elegant, the garden handsome, the canal beautiful, but the soil dry, barren and miserably sandy, which flies in drifts as the wind sits. In My Lord's house, and especially above the staircase in the great hall and some of the chambers and rooms of state, are paintings in fresco by Signor Verrio, being the first work that he did in England. . . .

" During my stay there His Majesty came almost every second day with the Duke (of York) who commonly returned to Newmarket, but the King often lay there, during which time I had twice the

honour to sit at table with him with all freedom. . . . On October 16th, came all the great men from Newmarket and other parts both of Norfolk and Suffolk, to make their Court, the whole house filled from one end to the other with Lords, Ladies and Gallants ; there was such a furnished table as I had seldom seen, nor anything more splendid and free, so that for fifteen days there were entertained at least two hundred people and half as many horses, besides servants and guards at infinite expense. In the morning we went hunting and hawking, in the afternoon, till almost morning, at cards and dice, yet, I must say, without noise, swearing, quarrel or confusion of any sort. I, who was no gamester, had often converse with the French Ambassador, Colbert, and went sometimes abroad on horseback with the ladies, to take the air and, now and then, to hunting ; thus idly passing the time, but not without more often recess to my pretty apartment, where I was quite out of all this hurry, and had leisure to converse with books, for there is no man more hospitably easy to be with than Lord Arlington, of whose particular friendship and kindness I had ever a more than ordinary share."

Besides Evelyn, the Countess of Sunderland was a guest along with a great number of the rest of the Court circle. Nor was there any secret as to why the French girl had been invited. Colbert had written to Louis repeatedly, informing him of every move in the game, spending money with a fine prodigality on expresses and other extravagant means of communication if he thought the news would interest and please the King.

And Louis *was* pleased. He had, in the months past, feared again and again that his agent, through her inexperience or her excitement or her over-scrupulous feelings, might, in the end, fail him.

Colbert had been uneasy. De K roualle, who had at first appeared so willing a participant in the diplomatic game, had later shown herself fastidious. The memory of the reputation she had gained through her affair with de Sault seemed ever to be with her. She was young, only a child yet . . . and they feared she might have other ambitions for herself than to be a king's mistress, quarrelling and competing with the violent Lady Castlemaine, laying herself open to the affronts and the gibes and the coarse Cockney humour of the orange girl, Nelly Gwynn.

Who knew but that her desire was to marry, to become the wife of some Englishman of good family, to whom she could bear children, watching them grow up, taking their part in the administration and the affairs of their own county, as, later, she was to try so valiantly and so unsuccessfully for her younger sister.

So the French faction grew uneasy while the English, the mistresses and their own parties, rejoiced because there was, after all, nothing to fear from the little Breton, although there had, in the early autumn, been a moment when Colbert had dared to hope she was pregnant by the King. In an excess of triumph and excitement he had written to Louis on September 17th, telling him that Louise had been taken sick in his room, that there were those who confidently predicted that Charles was the father and that all would be plain sailing from now on. But the hope had been premature. The sickness mentioned had been found to have its root in other causes while the treaty, the new and secret treaty, was in King Louis' pocket, to be used when and how he wished.

But it was not enough. It was not sufficient that Charles had, for a handful of silver, sold his country and the right to dictate his country's policy.

Charles might have signed, but he could always withdraw from or fail to carry out his promises. And he did withdraw. He did break the promises and Louis was never such a fool as to imagine that a man's name to a paper was a guarantee as to his good faith.

La Belle Bretonne's place was a safer thing to rely on than a king's word. So Charles was to be held by Louise who must see him daily. England, as it was said years later, was already, in Louis' mind, only a dependency of France.

It was all very shocking. Historians and pseudo-historians who have, for the past two hundred and fifty years, written the history of the reign have, almost without exception, condemned the King. They have written of him as Judas, as the last and one of the worst of the great traitors. But they have almost all of them failed to take into account what was the King's position, what were his own intentions and the enormous advantages which would derive from such an union. Without it Charles and his country must have parted company. The Commonwealth administration—as is the way with all dictatorships—had brought the land to bankruptcy. The Parliament, as we have seen and as we shall see again, refused Charles money or voted it to him, knowing full well that it could not be collected; and, all the time, Charles, from the French gold, parsimoniously eking it out, was paying his mistresses, against whom there has been and is such an outcry; helping his friends, paying those pathetic debts he had accumulated when in exile and, with whatever he could spare, laying up the beginnings of the English Navy, founding a regiment, encouraging and helping scientists and seeing the birth of the Royal Society.

There was something pathetic and magnificently

English about this man who had hardly a drop of English blood in him ; and it is this which was probably part of his genius ; just as the things that are most typical of him are the high things, as the blank sheet of paper that he sent to the Commons with only his signature at the foot, which meant so much and obtained so little.

He took risks. His politics were as unforetrollable as the results of his card play or the races in which his horses ran. But, unlike the cards and the horses, they nearly always brought home results.

So Colbert and Louise drove down to Euston, the Ambassador complaining of the English climate, praying that this would be the last winter his master would want him to stay in the land of fogs and eternal damp, while he instructed the girl in what she was to do. She was excited. At Euston she was received with acclamation and curiosity. At once it was made apparent that it was round herself that the whole visit centred. Her very rooms, overlooking the ornamental park with their own private staircase, proclaimed that. And, among the guests, there were bets as to whether the King would notice her this time, so that even old Evelyn, on one of his excursions from his room, secretly and with a certain sense of shame at his own curiosity, regarded her and afterwards wrote in his diary : " I now also saw that famous beauty ; but in my opinion of a childish, simple, baby face, Mademoiselle Querouaille, Maid of Honour to Madame, and now to be so to the Queen."

Meanwhile Charles and York were at Newmarket. Wren had just finished the building of his palace there, a relaxation from the building of the city churches that had been destroyed by the Fire, staying at Newmarket while the work was in progress, while Charles, with that infinite capacity of his for friendship, walked with him on the heath,

watching the horses and instructing the little architect in the habits of lap-dogs, and, in his turn, demanded information about building and draughtsmanship and complained that the rooms of the palace were too low save for one of Wren's diminutive stature.

They rode over to Euston. Arlington begged they would do him the honour of visiting his humble establishment. Colbert could not sleep for excitement, for as yet the King did not know that the young lady was there. If, after all, he should take offence. . . . He talked unhappily as to what would happen then. But they comforted him by reminding him of the distinct signs of approval that Charles had shown at his first meeting with her. They waited.

The English country-side was at its autumn loveliest. The trees round the house had put on their russets and golds. From all parts of the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk the gentry hurried in to do homage and pay their respects.

On October 8th Colbert had written to Louis : "It is certain that the King of England shows a warm passion for Mlle K roualle ; and perhaps you may have heard from other sources what a finely furnished set of lodgings have been given to her at Whitehall. His Majesty goes to her rooms at nine o'clock every morning, never stays there for less than an hour and often remains until eleven o'clock. He returns after dinner and shares at her card table in all her stakes, never letting her want for anything. All the Ministers, therefore, seek her friendship. Milord Arlington said to me quite recently, that he was much pleased at this new attachment of the King ; and that although His Majesty never communicated State affairs to ladies, still, as they could, whenever they pleased, render ill service to statesmen and defeat their

plans, it was well for the King's good servants that His Majesty should have a fancy for Mlle Kéroualle, who was not of an evil disposition and was a lady. It was better to have dealings with her than with lewd and bouncing orange girls and actresses, of whom no man of quality could take the measure. She was no termagant nor scold; and when the King was with her, persons of breeding could, without loss of dignity, go to her rooms and pay him and her their court. Milord Arlington told me to advise Mlle Kéroualle to cultivate the King's good graces, and to so manage, that he should only find at her lodgings, enjoyment, peace and quietness. He added that, if Lady Arlington took his advice, she would urge the new favourite either to yield unreservedly to the King or to retire to a French convent. In his opinion, I should also advise her in this sense. I answered jocularly that I was not such a fool, nor so ungrateful to the King, as to tell her to prefer religion to his good graces; that I was persuaded she did not await my advice, but that, nevertheless, I should not spare it upon her, to show how both I and Milord appreciated her influence, and in what esteem he held her. I believe I can assure you that she has so got round King Charles as to be the greatest service to our Sovereign and Master, if she only does her duty."

Louis had been pleased and amused, jesting and suggesting that Charles could not have cared greatly for Louise or he would not have trusted her to Colbert's keeping. But a fortnight later, when they were all ensconced at Euston and Charles had escaped from the Court at Newmarket and he and James had paid their first visit and seen and been satisfied, Colbert, in an agony of delight at seeing his scheme brought to fruition, was able to report: "The King of England comes here for his

repasts, and after eating he passes several hours with Mlle K roualle. He has already paid her three visits ; and he invited us yesterday to Newmarket to see the races. We went and were charmingly entertained, and he seemed more than ever solicitous to please Mlle K roualle. Those small attentions which denote a great passion were lavished on her ; and as she showed by her expressions of gratitude that she was not insensible to the kindness of a great king, we hope that she will so behave that the attachment will be durable and exclude every other."

And after that it sometimes became inconvenient for Charles to return to Newmarket. The nights were drawing in now. Sunset, in the full glory of which he and his brother James had galloped home over the unmapped country, came earlier now, while the Royal pair were still amusing themselves at Euston. So Charles would stay the night, leaving James to travel home slowly alone, lamenting that he too could not stay ; but lacking that lightness of heart that would have allowed him to do so.

Colbert watched. Daily horsemen galloped from the house, bearing his despatches to his king. The King of England had spent three hours with Louise. Louise had spent the whole day in her undress. It seemed that, at last, the thing had come to a head and he, Colbert, would have in her an invaluable ally in his embassy. His previous doubts as to her ability and scruples had been lifted. There were revels and masks. Evelyn, sour and conservative and prim, watched over them, recording them for posterity ; while, through backstairs gossip, the people of London heard of the goings-on and belated Puritans vented their fury and despair in such pamphlets as *The Blatant Beast* and *The Royal Wanton*.

It was Lady Arlington who suggested the final

dénouement. She gained the support of Lady Sunderland. Colbert was transported with delight as the plan was unfolded to him. If this should happen. . . . He gloated. He realized that once they succeeded there could be no withdrawal for the King of England, for he would have openly acknowledged Louise as he had done none other of his mistresses. And the suggestion was simply this : that there should be a mock marriage with Charles and Louise as bridegroom and bride and the whole thing completed with all the immodest ceremonies that were the custom ; and that would insure that the results of the union would be lasting and effective ; the retirement of bride and groom into the chamber and the consequent examination of the sheets.

Evelyn was not present. Perhaps his prim mind turned against it. But, at any rate, one seems to read in the entry in his diary a certain sneaking wish that he had shared in the fun and were able to write as a witness : " It is universally reported that the young lady was bedded one of these nights and the stocking flung after the manner of a bedded bride. I acknowledge that she was, for the most part, in her undress all day, and that there was fondness and toying with that young wanton, nay, it was said that I was at the ceremony ; but it is utterly false ; I neither saw nor heard of any such thing whilst I was there, though I had been in her chamber and all over that apartment late enough, and was observing all passages with marked curiosity. However, it was with confidence believed that she was first made a *Miss*, as they call these unfortunate creatures, with solemnity at the time."

But that was only one side of the picture, for, on the following " Sunday, a young Cambridge divine preached an excellent sermon in the Chapel, the King and the Duke of York being present."

Colbert wrote at once to Louis to inform him of de Kéroualle's triumph, receiving by return instructions to tell the young lady that her sovereign was mightily pleased with her; and "I have," he replied to Louis, "made that young lady joyful."

But whatever the French King thought of the matter, the ladies at Paris and Versailles viewed it in quite another light. "Don't you like to hear," Madame Sevigné wrote to her daughter, "that little K., whose star was divined before she left, has followed it faithfully. The King of England, on seeing her, straightway fell in love, and she did not frown at him when he declared his passion. The upshot of it is that she is in an intriguing state. Is it not all astonishing? Castlemaine is in disgrace. England, truly, is a droll country!"

It has been suggested that the whole affair of the mock marriage grew out of a legend; and that, after all, Charles and Louise were bedded without any such excitements. But on the whole the various accounts that have reached down to us seem to bear the stamp of truth, and the point that really matters is the fact that, exactly nine months later, Louise gave birth to a son whom Charles immediately acknowledged. In the meantime, however, the French King was anxious that the triumph of his subject be brought at once to bear on diplomatic channels.

There were three things he needed and each single one of them seemed more easy now that he had an ambassador in the King's bedchamber. The first was an alliance against Holland. Charles, as usual, was deeply involved in money difficulties. At Christmas, 1671, Louis had put into the field 124,000 troops. The world had been seized with panic. In the troops each man saw a threat to his own nation. One Englishman,¹ sitting in his

¹ Josselin.

country study, wrote: "A great diminution is likely to befall mankind next summer," while already the Government was three million in debt and the bankers chose this moment, when funds were so urgently needed for the refurnishing and building of the fleet, to refuse further advances.

The country was bankrupt.

On January 2nd the Council, hurrying away from its Christmas and New Year festivities, met together to review the situation. The revenue of the coming year was already mortgaged to the bankers; so that the only thing to do was to announce to the creditors, bankers among them, that they must wait, as there was not the money to pay them. The Council, with a fine show of indignation at being in such a position, delegated Clifford to put this ultimatum before them. If, Clifford was instructed to say, the bankers deserted the country now in its hour of need, the King must desert them and order a suspension of all bankers' assignments for the space of a year, interest meanwhile to be paid at the rate of 6 per cent.

A panic followed. The bankers who had, for years, flourished by keeping up the prices of necessary commodities, saw the loss of their own capital. Neither patriotism nor any other consideration was likely to inure them to this. As quickly as they could they passed on the deficit to their clients and seized private deposits lodged with them. The country was appalled. Men threatened suicide. The credit of everyone was lost and, at this point, with his Council, his men of commerce, even the people against him, Charles faced the whirlwind alone. He saw the bankers on January 7th, promised them that their debts with interest should, in the end, be paid up to the hilt and begged them that they would continue to meet their obligations to their clients.

It was a pitiable and a splendid thing for a king—and a Stuart king—to be forced to do. But the day was won. The crisis was averted and five days later the Council was able to order expenditure of three-quarters of a million for the fleet and, as Mr. Bryant has written: "Before the end of the month a dozen waggons, guarded by a troop of cavalry, were winding through the narrow streets of Rye towards London with the first instalment of the French war subsidy."

On February 2nd a *Traité Simulé* was signed with France for a war against Holland, and the entire Government committed itself to the French alliance. A peace delegation arrived from Holland. Superhuman efforts were made to prevent the breaking up of the Spanish alliance. Only at the seaports, where the memory of the Dutch raiding ships was hated, were men ready and eager for the war, "the seamen actually pressing to sign on in the King's ships."¹

In the early part of March Admiral Holmes attacked a Smyrna fleet off the Isle of Wight and, on the 17th of that month, war was declared. Five weeks later, Louis XIV, fulfilling his part of the bargain, set out from St. Germain-en-Laye on a conquering tour of Flanders.

The second mission that Louis had for Louise to negotiate was the declaration by Charles of the Catholic faith. But this was not so easy of attainment and, indeed, until the final fit, when the whole palace was thrown into a tumult and the Bishops of the Church of England were locked out of the King's chamber, while Huddleston was smuggled in, Charles's religion was the religion of his country and there was only one person in the world who could have said otherwise.

Now, however, on Louise's pressing him, he was

¹ Bryant.

willing to issue an Indulgence for Tender Consciences, giving some amount of freedom to Catholics and dissenting Protestants alike. This was on March 15th; but almost immediately it was seen that the measure was not likely to be a success. The Catholics were delighted; but the Protestant ministers, always seeing in such acts a hidden helping to Catholics, returned only a thanks of lip-service and were convinced that the King was preparing for the establishment of arbitrary government and a return to Catholicism.

Further than the proclamation of this act Charles dared not go. For his own conversion he was not prepared and, on being pressed, he gave one excuse after another, each very excellent, but none satisfying Louis . . . that the Pope was too old; that the English Catholics were too few in numbers and too weak to give him support; that, for reasons of expediency, the time was not ripe.

The excuses became weaker. They became absurd. It seemed indeed that the King of England was cornered at last.

Colbert, after consulting with Louise, announced to Versailles that he must give way. Louise redoubled her efforts and was assisted by Father Patrick, Confessor to the Queen. The King, they declared, was bound to embrace the true religion because only in that way would it be possible for the country to return to the true faith. Father Patrick insisted that there must be a permanent union between Charles and the Most Christian King. Charles, in his turn, hinted through Arlington that it would be gratifying if Louis were to grant the priest an Abbey with a pleasant stipend. Colbert supported the wish, stating that the priest had so convinced Charles that he had informed the Queen of Spain that he would become a Catholic,

But Charles, escaped from theological inexactitudes, was at work with his navy. Recognizing the difficulty he was in and realizing that to refuse Louise her request point blank would be to bring disaster on his head, he spent much time that spring with his fleet at the Nore and at Portsmouth and at Sheerness. And in May Evelyn, strolling on the Downs, saw the fleet at sea: "A goodly yet terrible sight to behold, passing eastwards by the straits twixt Calais and Dover on a glorious day." A fortnight later de Ruyter found that goodly yet terrible sight watering in Solebay and attacked it at once till only a few shattered wrecks crept homewards.

But if Charles had hesitation in accepting the Faith, James, with that astounding dullness which was eventually to lose him his throne, felt no such doubts. Anne Hyde, his first wife, had recently died, a converted Catholic. A few days later her son followed her to the grave. James, whether from true religion or from some strange mortification of the spirit, asked his brother's leave to remarry, taking a Catholic wife and openly declaring his faith.

Charles gave a reluctant consent, while all the Court ladies dressed themselves in their best in an attempt to catch the heir presumptive. The Duchess of Northumberland, beautiful and wealthy, laid siege. Lady Falmouth, who was, later, to receive vast sums of money from Charles, was another. "But," wrote Colbert, "I doubt whether this Prince's passion for her is so great as to lead him to marry her. He would rather take a French princess to whom His Majesty might give a dowry."

The marriage of James was the third commission that Louise had to undertake for her King.

To Colbert's letter Louvois replied: "If the Duke of York is desirous of a wife in order to have

children he cannot make a better choice than Mme de Guise who has been pregnant three times in two years and whose birth, wealth and prospects of fecundity appear to me to atone for her want of beauty."

But the Duke, meanwhile, sought to console himself for the loss of his wife by giving up Arabella Churchill, his mistress, and taking to him Catherine Sedley, the daughter of Sir Charles Sedley, the dissolute poet. Catherine was only sixteen at the time and was, if that were possible, even less prepossessing than Miss Churchill. She was pale, thin and had a pronounced squint, so that Charles was led to observe that, for his part, he supposed his brother's mistresses were supplied to him by his confessor as a penance. The young lady herself was also completely astonished at the honour conferred on her. "It cannot be my beauty," she said, "for I have none, and it cannot be my wit, for he has not enough to know that I have any."

Colbert and Louise were therefore puzzled for a means whereby they could persuade James into a marriage with the Duchesse de Guise. But they did not give up hope and, at the beginning of the new year, the Ambassador was assuring Louvois that "I shall neglect no means to ensure success in this affair, and I hope to triumph over every difficulty through the Queen's Confessor and the new mistress."

But James proved himself thoroughly intractable.

Contrary to the usual custom he would tolerate plainness in a mistress, but never in a wife.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEST ACT

MEANWHILE, despite the King's attentions to Louise, neither she nor the Ambassador were unaware of the jealousy and hatred for her that lay in the hearts of the older mistresses, the Duchesses of Cleveland and Richmond ; and Nell Gwynn and Moll Davies, the younger theatrical ones. Colbert's letters of the time are filled with warnings and forebodings, his diplomatic heart being shocked again and again by the indiscretions of the young lady.

And, indeed, she was indiscreet. Youthfully assured of her good fortune and never dreaming that it would desert her, she was already planning and dreaming of the time when greater honours would accrue to her. The other women were delighted. If there was anything that Charles, most enigmatic of husbands, would never tolerate, it was a slight on his pale, sick wife. Time and again when, thinking to please him, his councillors suggested he should take to himself a new wife in the hope of rearing children, he refused, telling them bluntly that, though he might want children, they should never see him do an innocent woman wrong. On his death-bed, too, when his wife, that poor, pathetic woman, sent to him to beg his forgiveness, he pulled himself up in the bed, his face ravaged with pain and his whole body in torture : " I forgive her ? Alas, it is she who should forgive me, poor woman."

He might neglect her. He might hurt her in many ways, only allowing her the one attention of leading her to her room at night and leaving her there while he went off to his own quarters and the ministrations of Chiffinch as he brought in the young ladies, but he would never tolerate the remark of any outsider. To him Catherine was always the Queen whom he might neglect and wrong, but whom he must ever protect.

She was taken ill that winter. The fogs had been very thick and, after they had dispersed, there had been a frost second only to that when King James I had roasted oxen on the Thames; and, while the King and the Court were skating and engaging in winter sports, Catherine had lain in her chamber, forgotten, seeing no one but her devoted Confessor, seeming as though she had not even the will to live.

The temptation was too great for Louise. Unlike the coarser English mistresses, Nell Gwynn and Moll Davies, who were happy so long as they were giving and receiving pleasure, she had all the shrewdness and greed of the born Breton. She already had proof of her own ability. Arriving in England a penniless exile, she was now the King's mistress, the envoy of her own King. The Queen's illness turned her head, for Colbert wrote angrily: "She does not know how to conduct herself in her good fortune. Having got it into her head that she may become Queen of England, she talks from morning till night about the ailments of the Queen as though they were mortal."

The other mistresses sniggered and waited. They nodded their heads together, whispering that already she had overstepped the mark. The King, they knew, would have none of this, and Louise, her conquest still incomplete, would be disgraced.

The tongues of everyone else, it must be admitted, ran on the same subject. Englishmen had never

loved Catherine. They had never had the chance of loving her, for they had never known her and, as she had proved herself, poor woman, incapable of bearing children, the hearts of all men were alarmed lest York, bigoted and dull, or Monmouth, vapid and foolish, might come to the crown.

The illness, too, must have been fairly severe, though the diagnosis was proved to be hopelessly wrong as, on February 20th, Colbert wrote to Louvois that Mr. Fraser, the King's physician, had announced that the Queen was "in a rapid decline which would put an end to her life in two or three months or, at latest, in a year."

But, despite this, Catherine was soon up and about again, and she managed to live another thirty-two years.

The theologians, however, came to the help of the doctors. The minds of all men were alarmed at the prospect of an uncertain succession and the French mistress might have read the fear in their hearts. But she was young yet. She did not know England and Englishmen. She had been fêted and honoured ever since her arrival, and she had no way of reading the minds of those in the taverns and the coffee-shops whose tongues ever coupled her name with all the torments of hell and the epithets that they hurled at the drabs of Drury Lane. She did not know Englishmen and, though later she came to know them and to honour them, it was never clear to her why Charles, intent on staying at home and forsaking travelling, would never take a French wife.

As always when there is a popular cry there will be those who will point out that the surrender to the cry is the will of God. Thus William Burnet, who came later to be the theologian at the Court of William of Orange, wrote two treatises—*The Solution of Two Cases of Conscience* and *The Other Divorce*, in

which he expounded the view that the King, being King, was above man and man-made laws and, without the necessity of his wife's death or a divorce, was free to take to himself a second wife and raise up heirs to his kingdom.

Charles was pressed on all sides. His councillors begged him to consider Burnet's advice. Day after day they badgered him and received as their only reply his question, would they have him do a hurt to an innocent woman? A second marriage he would not discuss; although that spring, strangely inconsequent, he hurled himself into an affair with Lady Falmouth, who had been suggested as York's bride, and, to appease her, gave the Duchess of Cleveland £40,000 from his own meagre resources. In the next twenty months, too, both Nell and Moll bore him children, and Cleveland, delivered of a daughter, stoutly maintained that it was the King's. But Charles would not acknowledge the child, saying that the father was John Churchill, later to be famous as Duke of Marlborough, but who was at this time a penniless officer in the Guards who had made the acquaintance of the Duchess through Mrs. Godfrey, his aunt, who had thrown the two together as much as possible. So fired with love for the foul-tongued woman was he, that Churchill got into the habit of visiting her in her apartments at the palace until one night, caught by Charles in the bed of the Royal mistress, he made a hasty and undignified retreat through the window.

For a moment it seemed as though Churchill's career was finished; but suddenly the King saw the joke and perhaps also the pathos of this young lover. "I forgive you," he called out through the window, "for I know you do but earn your bread."

Cleveland, despite her infidelities, remained the virtual sovereign, not only at the Court festivities,

but in the King's bedchamber. Catherine herself hated her and, on her first arriving in England and learning that Cleveland was to be one of the Women of the Bedchamber, she had grown black in the face with rage and screaming. Moreover, Churchill had not been the first of Cleveland's lovers. Before that there had been a hectic affair with Wycherley, the dramatist, that had been the talk of the town, men speaking of Wycherley's downfall and the disgrace of the Duchess and never understanding the amazing patience of their King who could only see one fault in human nature—to be unkind. Perhaps, if Charles had been less kind, his personal life would have been more free from worry. But one never knows, Charles had a code of conduct that has never been explained and that he, certainly, would have refused to explain.

He certainly felt no jealousy over the dramatist, for when Wycherley lay seriously ill, the King visited him, carrying with him a sum of money that he could ill afford, that the sick man might go to France to recuperate from his illness. And, on his return, he was offered the tutorship to the young Duke of Richmond, the son of Louise, at a salary of £1500 a year.

Despite these flirtations Louise, try as she would, was unable to dislodge the Duchess, until that lady, finding it impossible to live on the vast sums that Charles gave her, was forced to fly to France to escape from her creditors. Cleveland was a woman of furious temper, so that Charles, unwilling to hurt anyone whom he had once loved, was compelled to put up with her temper until she did fly. Louise, as ambitious, as devoted to her own interests and to those of her master in Versailles, was loving and gentle, ever ready to listen and never, though at times things were far from easy with her, complaining.

But for none of the mistresses had the people of England a good word to say save for Nell Gwynn. They understood her. She was one of themselves, one of those who had stood by the King, who had hidden him in the secret places of their houses and the secret places of their hearts. Her faults were the faults of English people—rough and coarse and boisterous, never setting themselves up but remaining what they had always been—the men and women who lived in the island before even the Normans came and who accepted things, the climate and poverty and dirt and disease and the legend of the Navy, as part of their heritage.

Men took liberties with Nell as they would never have done with Louise, and when she resented these liberties, boxing Buckingham's ears, smacking Wycherley where his mother had smacked him, they only laughed and loved her the more. She was English, a part of themselves as was the King, and, like the King, she was mad and incomprehensible. Her adventures were the talk of all who ever did talk. That she had risen from a brothel was no scandal, because to every Englishman, in those years after the Puritans, she might have been a wayward daughter, a woman with whom they had drunk, or with whom they had lain.

She was a joke, not a disgrace ; and she had the saving grace of never interfering. While Cleveland was demanding money and titles and honour, while Louise was selling the country to Louis, Nell lived quietly, going abroad in her coach ; laughing, as at Oxford, where the furious people, convinced that she was the French mistress, stopped the coach and threatened to murder her, till she poked her head out of the window with " be patient, good people. I am the Protestant whore."

Englishmen liked that because, with its utter lack of subtlety, they could understand it and were

not suspicious of it, just as they liked Clarendon, who played the buffoon and was full of high spirits and was robbed and knew he was robbed by his mistresses. But when it came to a foreigner aping the English tradition they were not so sure, and the Queen, staying with Lady Suffolk at Audley End, dressing herself with beautiful Frances Stuart as a dairy-maid and riding to Saffron Walden Fair, found herself chased to the gates of Audley End again.

They said they did not know she was the Queen. But one wonders was it not because she was not English, and she had not the right to adopt the grand English pastime of making a fool of herself?

Of all the mistresses Louise was hated the most. Court and people alike could find nothing good to say of her, all realizing the part she was playing and that it was to her that Charles crept after he had heard the abuse of Cleveland or the scoldings of the Faithful Commons who were demanding that he throw up the French Alliance and lift the Declaration of Indulgence. But Charles only laughed so that Colbert wrote: "The King of England hides his chagrin as well as he can." Perhaps Colbert was right, and already Charles was beginning to lose patience with those block-heads who, in order to prevent him ruling the country without them, compelled him to dissolve them and, for years, manage alone.

Although Charles laughed at his Parliament men the feeling of the country was undergoing a marked change; for the minds of Englishmen that had, in the first place, only grudgingly accepted the Declaration, now turned against it altogether, declaring that, if Dissenters must suffer, so they should so long as Catholics suffered the same. York, by his stupidity and zeal, had made an open



P. Lely

P. V. B., 1751

NELL GWYNN

reconciliation between Charles and Rome for ever impossible.

Propagating his faith, he inflamed men's minds so that already they were demanding his withdrawal.

Louise saw which way the wind blew. It was, she decided, all very well for Louis in Versailles, surrounded by the Church, knowing nothing of these odd, rugged people of England, to demand that there should be an immediate conversion to Catholicism. Louis did not know, had no means of telling what that would mean ; and so, through Colbert, she wrote to the Sovereign, informing him that for the King of England to declare himself now a Catholic would ruin all hopes, alienating the only part of the country that stood firm and stable and compelling His Majesty to go on his travels again. There was, she said, but one thing to do. Hitherto, she had noticed that the English had not objected to the priests of the Queen and herself. So they must move slowly. Bit by bit the stubborn people could be led to see that a reconciliation was possible and that Charles, as a Catholic, would still be Charles, an Englishman.

From those months when she had seen herself as the Queen, Louise had travelled far in understanding, but even now she had not quite got the measure of the people. From her apartments in Whitehall, from the laughing and worried lips of Charles, from the bigoted James and Colbert and the little bewildered Queen, she could get no conception of the very real hate and fear and loathing in which Englishmen held the Pope. A hundred years before this the fires at Smithfield had blazed. The Armada—the Papist Armada—had sailed in the Channel. Men and women had been taught from the Commonwealth leaders that Rome was anti-Christ and that the only pure religion and undefiled lay in the teachings of the dreary binders

of kings in chains and of nobles with links of iron ; or a less pure, but still tolerable religion in the pulpits, though rarely round the altars of the established church. And yet men now saw the Court with a Catholic Queen and a Catholic mistress. Men now saw the Duke of York as a Catholic heir. The fires of Smithfield would be on them again. An invasion of Jesuits would enter the land. Priests would swarm and the sovereign freedom of Englishmen would be lost as the King's father had tried to lose it.

The Faithful Commons stirred. Like a dog, growling in its sleep, it opened an eye, growled and then slept again while in the Council it became more and more apparent that money was needed. The supplies voted by Parliament were all spent. The King must summon the Commons or do as his father and go on his travels.

In February, 1673, the King walked by Louise's coach, on "a delicate, clear, frosty day," all the way from Whitehall to Hampton Court. Four days later he stood at the bar of the House demanding money for the upkeep of the fleet. The Commons received him coldly, telling him that, much as they hated the Dutch, they would only vote him supplies when he had withdrawn his Declaration of Indulgence.

Furious, Charles left the Chamber. He had no one behind him. Only Clifford of his Ministers stood firm. That night, pacing his room, listening to the chiming of the clocks that the scientist in him loved, he contemplated splitting his kingdom in civil war. At last, while the rest of the Court sat at its interminable card-tables, he came to Louise's apartments. They sat late discussing the situation and before cockcrow a horseman, carrying a despatch from Colbert, was galloping to Dover.

In an agony of suspense Charles and Louise

waited for Louis' answer. The Commons, suspicious, but not actually aware, wondered at the King's delay.

Charles faced his enemies alone. Yet he appealed once more to the Commons, telling them that the Declaration was issued while there was war abroad to keep peace at home. The Commons, bigoted in the religion they had helped to build and for which their fathers had suffered, were not impressed. James, pig-headed and obstinate, only complicated matters. At this hour even Clifford quailed, and a few days later the answer arrived from Louis.

But it was of no avail. Charles must surrender. He saw Louise again. Openly he met her in the picture gallery, carrying one of his dogs, while the Court watched and, having watched, gossiped.

He must surrender. But, if he must surrender, let him surrender as a king. So, on March 8th, wearing his Coronation robes, Charles drove down to the Commons to withdraw his Declaration, while in her apartments, frightened now, yet honestly loving this man who was at his hour of need, Louise waited.

During the afternoon, Louise still apart, the members crowded into the Banqueting Hall and drank the King's wine. All it seemed was well. King and Commons had met again with the inevitable result. But it was not enough. As a pack of hounds that has tasted blood, the Commons cried out for more. By the end of the month further supplies had been refused unless Charles gave his approval to the passage of a Test Act that would incapacitate all persons who would not take the sacrament after the rights of the Church of England.

In a riot of bigoted religiosity only Clifford held out, making an impassioned appeal in the Lords and thereby loosing all the worst vilenesses of men.

All over the country tests were observed, and on July 29th Sir Thomas Player wrote to his friend, Sir J. Williamson : " We are mighty busy swearing against the Pope." Clifford failed to appear at the altar and the worst suspicions were roused. In May suspicion became certainty when his coach, which was travelling up the Strand, being upset, my Lord was revealed in the company of a Popish priest in full canonicals. York, faithful to his faith, was deprived of his command of the fleet and was to be seen walking in the Park filled with gloom.¹ Men scorned him now. He was laughed at. Men only talked of Monmouth as the successor.

Meanwhile Lionne, the mouthpiece through whom Colbert and Louise had corresponded with Louis, had died and his place been given to Arnauld de Pomponne. He was a man of great sagacity and experience, weighing everything carefully and yet not unduly delaying ; but he lacked the fibre to stand up to Minister Louvois' attacks and was only too willing to allow events to shape their own course.

From the first it had been obvious that the Duke of York did not relish the idea of marriage with Mme de Guise, whom Louvois had proposed. But for a long time the French Ambassador and the courtiers at Versailles had refused to acknowledge this. Daily the attractions and the manifold advantages of a match with the Duchess were placed before James, only for him to turn and walk angrily out of the room, refusing to discuss the matter.

None the less Colbert, despite Louise's entreaties, had insisted. Finally, exasperated by the obstinacy of the Ambassador, yet realizing as clearly as he did the desirability of a union with a French lady, Louise suggested one of the Demoiselles d'Elbeuf.

¹ Bryant.

It was a clever move, for, time and again, James, having announced the repugnance he felt towards an unattractive widow, had suggested that, spiritually, his mate would be found in the person of some young and desirable virgin with whom he would make a pilgrimage to the memory of his first wife and the hope of rearing children to the memory of his own name.

The Demoiselles d'Elbœuf seemed to fit the bill nicely and Louise, with a charming thoroughness, had their portraits hung in York's rooms to accustom him to the idea. Only Colbert was offended. In a despatch of July 24th, 1673, he reported: "Mademoiselle de Kéroualle has had the address to cause one of the Demoiselles d'Elbœuf to be preferred to anyone else, that no one will now listen to the praises of the Duchesse de Guisc. Yesterday, in the Queen's chamber, Mlle de Kéroualle drew me aside and told me that the Duke of York would have preferred Mlle d'Elbœuf, even if he had found me much less encouraging; and she begged me not to offer any opposition to this marriage, and even to make it known that it would not be disagreeable to Your Majesty."

The letter shows the power to which Louise had risen. Colbert was furious. Only a few months ago Louise had been a penniless Maid of Honour. Now she aspired to deciding whom the Duke should marry. She, who had been a nobody at the puppet court of Monsieur and Madame of France, was now the patroness of the proud Princesses of Lorraine. But the Duchess showed no resentment that de Kéroualle should patronize her daughters, for the Maid of Honour had become a person of great political importance, while the Demoiselles d'Elbœuf had nothing but their beauty to recommend them.

Nothing, however, would reconcile Colbert and,

in another despatch to Pomponne, he complains she does this "as much and even more out of a desire to demonstrate what power she enjoys as to prove her friendship for this family." He was sick with rage. In an access of furious jealousy he set to work to destroy the web that Louise was attempting to weave round the Duke. He failed and drifted into an enmity with Louise; but, finding that alone he was powerless to do anything and not wishing the girl to succeed where he had failed, he drew Arlington into alliance with him. Together the two men came to Louise, seeing her in her own apartments where she received them while a negro boy brought in food and drinks and French musicians played. The visitors accepted her hospitality, listened to the strains of the music, voted it charming and then proceeded to point out to her that it was entirely through their good offices that she had got where she was; without them, they argued, she might still be a penniless maid in France or, worse still, what Nell had been. Louise smiled, remembering that, after all, it had been the King who had sent her here and it had been the King of England who had done anything that had been done for her. After all, all that Colbert had done had been done not for her benefit but for his own advancement at Versailles as the numerous despatches must have showed.

But she bowed and agreed and said she was sorry, while Arlington pictured the delights she had enjoyed under his roof at Euston and Colbert accused her of the utmost ingratitude. But their remarks had little effect on Louise. All these months she was given over to the vast happiness of knowing that she would bear a child in July, while towards her Charles behaved with an ever increasing tenderness. The Test Act had left her untouched. Even James, compelled as he was to

attend the Chapel services, amused himself by making eyes at Cleveland so that his ears should not be assailed by the Anglican prayers.

Meanwhile Colbert, incensed with Louise, had repeated his despatches to Versailles with the result that Louis, through his delighted Ambassador, informed Louise that he was none too pleased at the idea of a marriage between James and one of the Demoiselles d'Elbœuf.

But if Colbert had supposed she would display any signs of disappointment he had a shock, for, without reluctance, almost as though she had never fostered the idea, Louise put it from her, leaving the two young ladies to become Sisters of the The Visitation, while James, puffing and blowing, dull and important even in his love making, set himself up with Mary Beatrice of Modena.

Louise rested. In her body she carried the son of the King. For a little time she must take her case lest she jeopardise his chances and her own that, through his arrival, would be so greatly increased.

That summer she had a kind of hammock set up in the gardens of Whitehall where she lay, day after day, watching the busy throng of people as they moved past her, the watermen on the Thames, the King's spaniels as they gambolled over the grass; walking sometimes or going in her sedan chair as far as Pele Mele where the new game that the Court played was in progress and Charles and James and Buckingham and young Rochester, away from the cares of their so similar and so different lives, laughed and played and drank together.

So that summer, when all England was in a state of chaos and uncertainty, passed peacefully and serenely for the French mistress.

CHAPTER V

DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

ON July 29th, 1672, Louise was brought to bed and delivered of a son to be named Charles Lennox. With the birth of her child her position was secured. Hitherto there had always been a possibility that, in the end, Charles would weary of her and she would be sent back to the Court at Versailles. Those who suspected the part she played searched diligently for proof, but they never found it. There was no proof save in the letters that were locked in the bureaux of succeeding ambassadors and in the memory of the King himself. Suspicion was always to play round her name, but to the end the English people were never truly aware that, without her, Charles would have found it impossible to continue at all. That she was the emissary of Louis was guessed by all, but not many guessed how welcome an emissary she was, not only for her body and person but far more on account of the King's financial standing. The actual government of the country, the upkeep of the Royal households, the slender building of the navy, the establishment of a regiment and the research work of scientists, all these were impossible once the French gold ceased its beneficent flow. And how much easier it was, how much more palatable when the French gold could be sent through someone who understood Charles and who did love him and to whom he could retreat

as he could retreat to none of his other mistresses, because they were too impatient or too ignorant or too blatantly self-seeking. Of all the ladies at the Court the only one who was provided with a mind that could converse with the King was the Breton girl.

The child was named Charles Lennox. There was talk in the Palace. The King visited the mother as she lay exhausted after the delivery. The Queen sent her a present of tea. The child was bathed in the milk of asses and the Londoners grumbled. Madame Carwell would stay now and, if she stayed, what certainty had they that the King would not make the child his heir? There was talk in pot-houses. The King's Players met at the back of the stage and sent a deputation to Nell, telling her that she was not to despair. The people of London loved her and they knew that the King loved her; and, when the actress drove along the Fleet in her coach, they mobbed her and cheered her, for she was one of themselves, someone they knew and understood, lacking French guiles and deceit.

In her apartments Louise dreamed again. They had laughed at her before. They had told her that it was impossible for her to be Queen. But did they know? The little Portuguese had no children. Charles wanted an heir. Was it not possible that, through the children of Charles and herself, the kingdoms of France and England might be united?

Colbert, delighted, forgiving her for some of her impudence, wrote to Louis, received his reply and wrote again: "I was able to give much pleasure to Mlle. de K roualle in assuring her of His Majesty's satisfaction, and his desire that she should long remain in the good graces of King Charles. To all appearances she is likely to do so to the exclusion of all others."

There was a setback, however. Word came to Louise that the Queen was again with child. There was great excitement in the palace and city. Men spoke of nothing else. The Queen was a Catholic ; but her children would be reared in the National religion and the bastard of the French strumpet would be put back from the succession. But in the end the hopes of the Queen and the whole country were shattered through a pet fox of Charles's which, jumping on the bed, brought on that unfortunate lady's last miscarriage.

At the beginning of 1673 Louise, who had weaned her child and was about again and whose car men were now trying to reach for audience with the King, sent for Colbert and asked him to write to Pomponne, requesting that Louis would grant her permission to become a naturalised English subject, "as a necessary means to enable her to profit by the gifts that the King of England might have the kindness to bestow on her." Permission was granted and soon afterwards, on August 19th, Louise was created Baroness Petersfield, Countess of Farnham and Duchess of Pendennis, a title that, for some unexplained reason, was almost immediately changed to Duchess of Portsmouth. At the same time she was promised, according to a letter which Colbert wrote to Pomponne, that she would be made a Lady of the Bedchamber, which would raise her as high as any of the other mistresses.

Court and town were appalled ; not at all because this honour was being accorded to the King's mistress, but because she was a Frenchwoman and a Catholic. The Test Act, men remarked, should have been framed to meet such cases as hers. As it was, the job had been only half done.

But much as Louise delighted in her new high-sounding titles, her desire was to return to the Court



P. Lely

DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

at Versailles and there, occupying no humble position, to be raised to the tabouret of a Duchess in the Presence Chamber of le Roi Soleil.

The tabouret was the peak of the ambition of every Frenchwoman at that time, no matter what honours she might have received in a foreign country. And Marie d'Arquien, the wife of Jean Sobieski, did not cease from striving to obtain that honour at the Louvre until she became the Queen of Poland. "To think," her husband cried, "how she longs for that miserable stool on which no one can sit at ease." Later, even when she was Queen, she kept demanding the title of French Duke for her father, until Louis XIV was compelled to reply, through his ambassador at Warsaw, that he regretted to be obliged to express his just repugnance to grant Marquis d'Arquien a dignity that he had so little merited; and that he was surprised and appalled that the Queen of Poland should repeatedly ask for it.

But, if the King of Poland was a nobody, the King of England was the one necessary ally without whom Louis could not build his empire. Accordingly, he gave orders that any demands that his mistress might make were to be treated with the utmost respect and consideration and the first step to the tabouret for Louise was the grant of the ducal fief of Aubigny. In July, 1673, therefore, Charles spoke to Colbert of "his desire that Mlle de Kéroualle should be granted the fief in such manner that this demoiselle should be able, not only to possess it for her lifetime, but even to dispose of it freely, assuring me that he, on his side, would take precautions to prevent it passing from the Royal House of England and making me understand that it should remain in the hands of the son that he has by this demoiselle."

Colbert sent the request although he was at this

time in the middle of his squabble with Louise over the Duke of York's marriage, and his despatch, accordingly, lacked affection for the lady. "But, as it appears," he added, "that the King of England has much attention and kindness for her, I leave His Majesty to judge what consideration and kindness should be paid to the request of the said King."

Louis had no wish and no intention to offend Charles at this time, but neither had he any intention of granting him all his requests. Should Aubigny, he argued, be given to the Duchess it would, on her death, pass to her son and be lost for ever from the Royal estates. That in itself might not matter; but up to the present Charles had not acknowledged his latest son; and Arlington, being asked by Colbert as to the reason for this, admitted that the King, whose sons were legion, shrank at this moment of trouble with his Parliaments from acknowledging yet another. Moreover, Arlington disclosed that when Charles had been seeing to the drawing up of the patents for Louise, he had told the Treasurer that her son could not succeed her.

Louis was angry and shocked at Charles's lack of generosity. The fief of Aubigny was not to be granted under any such conditions. He informed Colbert of his decision. The Ambassador, however, anxious that Louise, who was now so powerful at the English Court, should not regard him as an enemy, suggested an alternative. The fief of Aubigny was to be given to the Duchess of Portsmouth without ducal rights and it should revert to any natural son of the King whom he should appoint to succeed her.

It was a disappointment. The tabouret was, for the moment, out of her reach. Her work, she considered, had not been rewarded as was its due; and,

in these weeks, Charles, retreating after cards to her chamber, found her pensive and discontented and inclined to grumble. He laughed at her, bidding her rally herself. It was only, he told her, a part of the game that there should be these temporary inconveniences. The tabouret would be granted in the end and it would be sweeter because she had had to wait for it. So they laughed at it, but Charles, no less than Louise, was angered at what he regarded as a French slight to himself as well as to the Duchess and he was not so easily appeased when the news came that the fief of Aubigny had been bestowed under Colbert's conditions as he made pretence to be.

But, if Louise had to wait for French honours, those of the country of her adoption came to her quickly. Two years after her own creation as Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles, proud and paternally sentimental over his son, created him Duke of Lennox in Scotland and Richmond in England, with the right to bear the Royal arms on his shield.

The mother was delighted ; but Colbert, still nervous lest she become too powerful, saw to it that the patents of her nobility contained no mention of heirs in remainder ; and one wonders what the good man would have said had he known that to this day the Dukes of Richmond would remain the Ducs d'Aubigny ?

CHAPTER VI

THE ENGLISH PEACE

SHE had reached the height of her power. For the rest of the reign, save for two very short intervals, one at the time of the arrival of the Duchesse Mazarin and the other at the time of Titus Oates's Popish Plot, she was the most politically important figure in the country.

She was never popular. Outside her own particular circle she was viewed with horror and loathing, as one lower than Judas, who was betraying their country and her own country, too, after her naturalization, with her kisses. And within that circle she was as lonely. She was witty, beautiful, fabulously wealthy. She was courted by all those who needed the King's ear. She worked day and night in the service of the French Minister and the work was only made more difficult in that she did really love Charles. With only one suggested infidelity she remained faithful to him as did none of the other mistresses ; and the affair with the Grand Prior rests on very slender evidence and has never been substantiated.

While Charles lived she was safe ; not safe for herself, but safe because she was the ambassador of Louis without whom Charles would be bound to go on his travels. But with Charles dead, with James coming to her two hours after the death and giving her his grudging promise of protection, she knew that she had no one on whom to rely and that she was finally alone—utterly and completely alone,

as she had felt that time in Versailles when the news had reached her of Sebastian's death and again at St. Cloud when Madame of France had stopped her laughter.

That autumn it seemed as though the end had come already. At the end of September, Charles, overworking himself as he ever did, had an apoplectic fit and when the Commons met on the 20th of the month they met in no uncertain spirit. The security on the King's life had lessened. The fit had destroyed what confidence had ever been built up; and the marriage of James to the young Catholic, Mary of Modena, had alarmed men's minds once again at the thought of the succession.

Shaftesbury, leader of the Protestants, in a mood of bigotry and indecent haste, was demanding that the King divorce the childless Catherine while she, poor woman—never understood, never quite tolerated—wept in her room with the King away from her.

For a week Parliament was prorogued while those at Whitehall breathed again. The King and York could be seen in *Pele Mele* and once—on a fine day—on the river. But strife was afoot. The city was filled with vague rumours. Men had not forgotten the coach overturned in the Strand and the Catholic priest inside. They had not forgotten the visit of Minette of which the French mistress was ever a reminder. And they had not forgotten the standing army of Charles I as they watched the new regiment being drilled at Whitehall. Rumour was rife. The Commons, filled with the spirit of those who had watched one king die, assembled again at the end of the week while Charles walked down through the autumn leaves to meet them.

They were in an evil temper. Under the Speaker's chair was a wooden sabot with the English arms on

one side and those of the French King on the other. The significance was clear. The secret of Minette's Grand Design was out. Men knew now that they had been sold and that the land must be free of tyrants.

In a fury they threw themselves on four great grievances—the Growth of Popery and the Marriage of James; the standing army and the French alliance.

On November 3rd, in a crowded House, from which all opposition had been ejected, they voted the standing army to be an abuse. The House rocked cheering. In the streets outside men paused wondering what was to do and then, in the way of Englishmen, passing on to their own business. But the pack in the House had got the smell of blood now. It grew mad with rage and that afternoon it marched to Whitehall to protest against James's marriage.

Louise was in her apartments when they came to the Palace. Charles had not seen her that day. Worried and impatient and anxious he had talked with his councillors. Louise's child had been taken from her to be nursed by another. In another room the Queen waited with her Confessor, who was all she had to rely on just as the husband of the Queen was all the Frenchwoman had. The old councillors, whom they had both understood, had gone away now—Shaftesbury, a traitor; Lauderdale in Scotland; Buckingham down in the country and Clifford, who had been so heroic and fanatic, crying: "Well, let men say what they will; there is a God, a just God above," had joined the immortals. Of the five only Arlington had remained and of Arlington they could not be sure.

Through the autumn air there came now to those in the Palace the sound of men's voices, the tramp of feet, the shouts of those bent on the accom-

plishment of their purpose. Chiffinch, the First Page of the Backstairs, came out of his quarters and hurried to the terrace where he could see what was toward. The Queen and the Confessor turned to each other, not understanding the noise but alarmed and each looking to the other for the help they would surely need, while into the courtyard there marched the rulers of England, the men whom Charles, by guile and diabolical cleverness and a mighty good humour, contrived to manage for twenty-four years.

They were a little embarrassed. Honest squires, merchants, old peers come up from the country where they had hunted priests and foxes, they presented their address. They inveighed against the Duke's marriage. They demanded that the new Duchess of York be put away ; and, well content, having blundered through their duty, they returned to the House to impeach Lauderdale and be ignominiously and provokingly prorogued by Charles till the middle of January.

For the moment, by an action that no one else would have dared to contemplate, Charles had saved himself, his wife and brother and Lauderdale. But he was terribly alone. No longer now was there Minette on whom to rely ; no longer bluff Clarendon or honest Clifford ; only in the rooms given over to one of the mistresses, where, in the past, he had gone for amusement, was there help and comfort to be found. Louise had helped him before. They understood one another and loved one another.

So he went to her now. She had seen the men who had come demanding James's wife. She knew that Charles had sent them packing and she knew that, without them, there was no money, nothing on which the King could lay his hands, while the sailors in the harbours were unpaid and the household servants were grumbling and the horses in

the Royal mews were ill, owing to the collapse of the roof, and there were all the debts of the war.

She humoured Charles, letting him pour out his tale of woe, not talking of herself as Cleveland would have done, not trying to laugh him out of his misery as Nell would have tried. She let him talk, until they saw that there was only one thing to do and that it must be done. Louis was approached. Charles, the King said, could only continue to fight if Louis paid the bills. Otherwise he would be forced to withdraw and make peace alone.

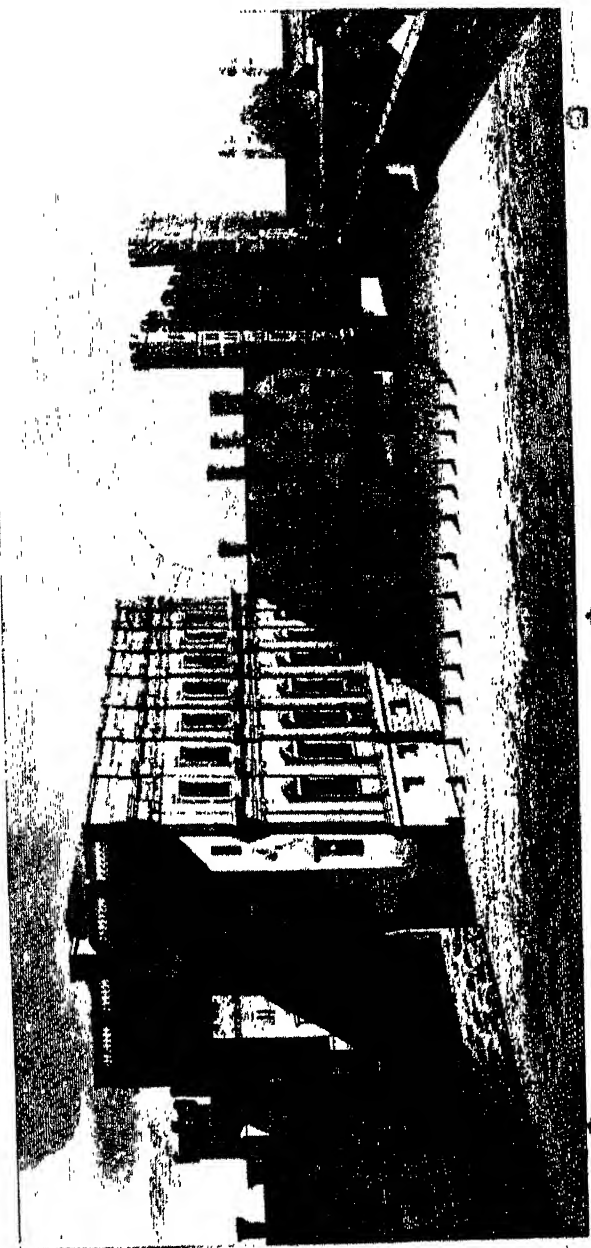
But Louis was not sympathetic. He offered £75,000, a sum so totally inadequate as to be an insult.

There was nothing for it, Charles saw, but that peace must be made. Louise was in despair. She saw now as Charles saw and as it was inevitable, they should see the complete collapse of the alliance between the French and English Kings, for Charles was now more bankrupt than he had ever been.

But, with a strange perversity, Louise seemed to believe that money would always be forthcoming. Her rooms at Whitehall were as luxurious as ever. Constant alterations were made within them to suit her taste. There were to be seen the new French fabrics familiar only to dwellers in Versailles and St. Germain, "which was of most tender work and design and an incomparable imitation of the best painting."¹

Daily the King, harassed as he was, walked through the long gallery to her apartments, stopping here and there on his passage to speak to some courtier who had caught his eye. He would stay there an hour or two laughing and talking, forgetting for a little, in the happiness of that atmosphere, all the cares that oppressed him. Behind him, crowding him, jostling round, came all those who

¹ Evelyn.



WHITEHALL PALACE



THE WHITEHALL PALACE

THE WHITEHALL PALACE

THE WHITEHALL PALACE

WHITEHALL IN THE TIME OF CHARLES I AND CHARLES II

had any favour to ask and who were aware that the King of England was often represented in the Duchess of Portsmouth.

Buckingham, returned from the country where he had been the bluff, country squire, feigning to forget the rudeness he had shown to Louise on other occasions, bent and kissed her hand, as he kissed the hands of Nell and Cleveland and slovenly Moll Davies.

But she was not impressed. Buckingham's hour, she realized now, was past. If Charles would resurrect his fortunes, he must turn elsewhere. She smiled at them all. She could be as subtle as Charles sometimes. She smiled at them all and listened to the appalling tales of the state of the country and hinted that the Duchess of Portsmouth needed new plate.

Amazingly, with the country bankrupt, the household servants unpaid, the bills for Charles's own clothes mounting in Chiffinch's closet, the plate was forthcoming and they made merry again and all England hated more intensely than ever the French harlot who made the King forget his duties and was wasting the country.

Late that autumn, all other helps failing him, Colbert reported to his master that Charles was recalling the only party that had ever stood firm by Church and King. In the summer one of the old members had written : " We are not altogether in despair that the old honest party will weather the storm, my lord of Ormonde being in the Cabinet."

The new Treasurer, however, was Osborne, soon to be created Lord Danby and, by the idle, to be reputed Louise's lover. He was, as Mr. Arthur Bryant has written : " Shrewd, hard and business-like as the Yorkshire from which he came ; experienced in finance and public affairs and with

all a country gentleman's distrust of Whig Lords and fanatics, he was to prove a match for the best brains of the opposition." His policy was for an immediate saving of public money and the disbandment of the fleet; but Charles, partly persuaded by Louise, was unwilling to abandon the French alliance without one last attempt. Through Colbert, she reported to Louis: "The King of England is loath to leave a union that has already helped him so greatly." So, on January 7th, when Parliament again assembled, the King—this time alone, but driving through the snow—went to meet them, offering to read to them the text of the false treaty he had signed with Louis. But he was too late. The storm now burst. Shaftesbury, that demon of alarm, had persuaded the Lords that sixteen thousand Catholic troops were in arms waiting to attack the city. A week later a Bill was passed for the removal of Lauderdale, still faithfully supporting the King in Scotland. And the day after Arlington and Buckingham were attacked. But Buckingham, who, in addition to kissing the hand of Louise, had been pleasing "the debauchers by drinking with them, the sober by grave and serious discourses and the pious by receiving the sacrament," managed in a lengthy and pitiful speech to throw the blame on Arlington. He in his turn, hunted out and brought to the bar, admitted nothing, while Charles and Colbert and Louise waited trembling, but threw the blame on the Ministry collectively.

For the time Arlington was saved but it was at last clear, even to Charles, that the French alliance must go.

And, shouted the Faithful Commons, if the alliance why not the harlot? In her apartments, more beautifully and richly furnished than ever, entertaining Wycherley and Sedley, whose daughter

was the mistress of York, Louise was sought out by Colbert. Arlington came running like a frightened deer, only, with a fox's cunning, to wait to see if he could cover his tracks. Would Louise flee? Colbert was nervous. If she once did that, all hope of fixing up the alliance again would be lost. But what else was there for her to do? Louise herself answered the question. With amazing calmness, laughing at Colbert whom she had never quite forgiven, scorning Arlington and Buckingham for their duplicity which was not even successful, she took to her bed. She was ill, she declared. Mr. Frazer, the Queen's Physician, was summoned. He examined her carefully, bleeding her after the manner of the time, purging her and applying all the other savage and merciless remedies of which medicine knew. There was nothing the matter except that she, unlike the poor Queen, whom the Commons would, an they dared, have put away, was again pregnant. And when Mr. Frazer departed, Louise, "during that week of bloody impeachments and accusations," took herself off to Windsor to rest and get away from the London fog. Furthermore, lest it be imputed that her going was a thing of secrecy and fear, she travelled with an escort of the household cavalry.

They were not altogether unneeded. Before the coach had left London it had been the target for stones and mud and foul abuses.

Charles, left behind, acted with that statesmanship which was always to be the wonder and embarrassment of his countrymen. On January 24th he sent to Parliament the terms suggested for an Anglo-Dutch alliance and peace. The Dutch granted the right of the flag, an indemnity of £200,000 and the restoration of the colonies. Both houses were favourable and, on February 9th, Charles, having received his ambassador, Sir

William Temple, back from The Hague, announced to the Lords and Commons that the peace was concluded.

To Englishmen it was a triumph for which they took all the credit and hastily forgot that weary, unhappy man who, bringing it to pass, knew in it only his own humiliation and the betrayal of an ally. To Louise, having galloped that night to Windsor, he must have wept his disgrace ; and, by Ruvigny, he sent his apologies to Louis and his promise that those regiments already in the field with the French should, under no circumstances at all, be withdrawn.

But, on the 12th, having risen at four and bidden Louise to follow him, Charles was back at Whitehall, listening to reports of further bills that would rear Royal children as Protestants and banish York from the capital.

The King had lost patience. Parliament, for which he had sacrificed so much and that had never helped him, contented itself with attacks on himself and his family while utterly ignoring the pressing need for money for the public services. On the 24th, having listened to their hopeless wrangling and complaining, Charles in disgust sent them home till November.

He was in desperate straits. On all sides those to whom he had given liberally in the past now asked in vain. The King had not for himself. How, therefore, could he give ?

Louise, more lonely than ever, sent for her sister, Henriette Mauricette, who was younger than herself and no more than ordinarily plain. At the time that Louise had left home she could have been no more than a child playing in the nursery. But, since the death of Sebastian, she was all that she had of her own kin ; and, besides, with the French alliance temporarily in abeyance and her

child being nursed by a wet-nurse, she had plenty of time on her hands for entertaining her sister.

So, while Danby was ruthlessly pursuing his policy of retrenchment and was valiantly hauling the Exchequer out of the appalling state it had been landed in by Clifford's reckless expenditure, Louise begged Charles to send a yacht over to Brest, with a member of the Household in attendance, to bring her sister in safety.

Her arrival could not have been worse timed. The English, smarting under Danby's economics, saw in her only another source of expense and even Ruvigny could find nothing better to say than that "Henriette de Kéroualle is nothing to look at. She came alone with a gentleman who was sent in a yacht to Brest to fetch her. She was at once given £600 a year." It is small wonder that the people, groaning under the taxes of Danby, looked askance. But, allied with this policy of the Treasurer and as a direct consequence of it, the country now entered into a period of comparative prosperity. "Trade," it was written, "flourishes in all our ports. This is likely to be a very happy and fruitful year in all manner of commerce."

For the first time since his landing in 1660 Charles was solvent and, in accordance with his custom, he set to work to pay off old debts. Two years' compound interest was paid to the bankers. The mortgages on the Royal Dockyards were lifted and the Royal mistresses came in for their share of the King's generosity. Cleveland, now practically retired from the Court, was able to marry her daughters, each splendidly apparelled and furnished with a dower paid by the King. On Louise were heaped gold, silver and diamonds and "silver plate for her rooms" such as she loved and even Nelly, apartmented in her own house in Pall Mall, received the money to buy a new coach and

a bed adorned with cherubs and new underwear of "thorough cleanliness, neatness and sumptuosity."

The whole Court had its place in this new time of prosperity. There was laughter and gaiety where previously there had been fear and uncertainty. Louise, supported by her sister, saw to it that she received her fair share of the takings and a letter written by Andrew Marvell on December 19th, 1674, gives some idea of the vast sums that were being paid to her. She received an annual income from the wine licences of £10,000 a year; and a few months later, when she set about building herself a palace, she was credited with having received a further £136,688!

But there is doubt about this. Probably the sum mentioned had, in the first place, its origin in idle gossip, for Louise was not satisfied with her palace on its first building and had it demolished and when they built it the second time she did the same thing. It was only on the third building that she expressed herself pleased.

It was probably this ostentatious expenditure, coupled with her embarrassingly ceremonial manners, that made the English hate her so heartily at this time; while Nelly, whom they loved, had for her share, "out of a gross total of something more than half a million, something very inconsiderable compared with the huge amounts paid to the other Royal favourites," the cautious Dasent tells us. At first, accustomed as she was to the small salaries of the theatres, she asked for only five hundred a year. But eventually Charles raised this to £5000 a year settled on herself and her children.

Between Nell and Louise there was an endless hatred and rivalry. They stood as the poles apart. Neither could understand the other. Louise, with her overwhelming good breeding, her finger in

every political pie, her boundless ambition, could never tolerate the actress who wanted no more than a good time out of life and enough money to help all the other people who might apply to her. And Nelly, for her part, felt only hate and contempt for one who, in her own interests and those of her sister, was willing to bleed the country dry of its resources and must ever be moving on to greater and higher glories.

The one has become an English idol. The other has been half-forgotten despite the incomparably more important position she occupied and, when remembered, hated. But, viewed dispassionately and their different origins compared together, it seems doubtful if in reality the ambition of either comparatively exceeded the other. To the actress and orange-girl, who had never been away from the dark streets round the Fleet, who had watched her old mother die from drinking too much brandy, the acquisition of a house in Pele Mele must have been a greater triumph than the thrice-built palace to the Duchess of Portsmouth who was familiar with the customs at Versailles, with its wealth and its splendour. But public opinion will not be changed now and Nell will remain as Burnet said : "the indiscreetest and wildest creature that ever was in a Court," while Louise is the avaricious creature of legend.

There were other mistresses now who, in this time of prosperity, received recognition. Moll Davies had her pension raised to £1000 a year. Barbara Villiers received new dresses and jewels while, far away in Holland, poor Lucy Walters, pretty and dull and flighty, received her portion, though only a few years previously she had, as Arthur Bryant says : "narrowly escaped being drummed out of The Hague as an infamous woman."

But the Commons, puritan and parsimonious, utterly heedless that it was through the King's own statecraft that the country had been raised from utter penury, complained bitterly about what Shaftesbury was to call "the chargeable ladies." Charles, they affected to believe, never spent a penny that was not spent on these beauties and whenever in future he applied for money, the ladies were mentioned by these faithful guardians of his purse and his morals till, in the end, Charles got tired of it and managed without them.

Soon after the arrival of Henriette the Court moved to Windsor where the King went fishing and busied himself with training his young army, staging for them beneath the windows of the castle a mimic siege with "great guns fired, mines sprung, prisoners taken . . . and all the circumstances of a formal siege."

But, though he loved to teach his soldiers, he had no intention of going to war himself, for in that summer, while he was fishing and alternately making love to and settling the quarrels between Nell and Louise and while the rest of Europe was embroiled in bloodshed and fighting, England was putting on herself the garments of peace. For the first time for years men went about their business with no outside entanglements to worry them, no continental alliances to distress them and nothing but the accomplishment of the craftsmanship they had in hand.

In a silversmith's shop in London where a service of plate was being made for Louise, the citizens crowded into the shop, watching curiously and only showing their disappointment when they learned that the service was destined for the Duchess and not for the loved Nell. In his office, poring over his papers, Samuel Pepys reported the doings of the town and visited the theatres and lamented

that the new actresses were not up to the standard of dear Nelly. Defoe, embittered and the idol of the crowd, listened to gossip of the ladies and of how, when someone had been praising Nell Gwynn and her wit and her beauty and how she always delighted the King, Portsmouth replied: "Yes, but one may tell she has been a whore by her swearing."

The country prospered. In September Charles announced to the Council that he had no intention of summoning Parliament till the spring. Shaftesbury set about conspiring against him, now residing in the city and setting on foot wild rumour that Catholics were being impressed into the standing army.

But, for the moment, no one took him seriously. Now that the land was at peace and prosperous, men were content with their king and that autumn Charles and York might have been seen walking in the park, walking and talking together, which, at any other time, would have been taken as a threat of a Papist succession, but was now regarded with equanimity.

Word came to Louise from Versailles that Louis was willing to increase his subsidies to Charles provided that monarch kept his parliaments prorogued. The King took no heed. Louise, bent on a match for her sister, was not over-emphatic. Together the Royal lover and his mistress set about finding a husband. Their search was complicated by the number of suitors for the plain girl's hand, for the sister of the Duchess of Portsmouth, it was argued, would surely hold the ear of the King; and to be the husband of such a one would be a great profit. There were masks at Whitehall. Louise, who had gone into mourning at the death of a French nobleman with whom she was no way related, only to be mocked by Nell,

abandoned black and, in an effort to wheedle money out of the Treasurer, led Danby up the garden path.

The country was angered. Danby it had regarded as one of its stalwarts who could in no way be tempted from his right duty. Now, it seemed, he was to become but another chattel of Louise. Even Chiffinch was alarmed. Nell, never concerned with politics, laughed at them all and snubbed Buckingham who was trying to creep back into the King's good graces.

But Louise meant nothing. She was too much of a family woman for that. She had her own child, her husband in all but the blessing of the Church and she had the task of getting her sister married. However Danby might wheedle, she gave him nothing but smiles and polite talk.

Between them, with an incredible lack of consideration for the bride, she and Charles picked out Pembroke as the ideal husband. He was a man of foul and infamous conduct. His vices, indeed, amounted to such that, in these days, he would have been accounted as mad; and only a few months before the betrothal he had been committed to the Tower for an act of appalling blasphemy. His drinking was notorious and he consorted with the dregs of the London brothels. But the die had been cast and "The Duchess of Portsmouth's sister was married on Thursday to the Earl of Pembroke. The King pays the portion," wrote a London merchant. Henriette, young and untrained, was carried off to the almost regal palace of Wilton.

With Henriette off their hands Charles moved the Court, Louise with him, to Newmarket and "in that spring, "amid March dust in abundance and November ice," lost his money with the rest of the fashionable world when the famous horse, Lusty,

was beaten. But, as recompense, he regained his fortune by winning the Newmarket Plate on his own mount by sheer feat of horsemanship. . . ." The month passed and in April the Court returned to Whitehall, Charles to meet his Parliament and protest his love for them and Louise to meet her sister and hear from her of the appalling suffering she was forced to undergo at the hands of her husband.

She must have been horrified. There is no actual record of what Henriette had to contend with ; but her account was sufficient to send the Duchess hurrying to Charles whom she found with his clocks and mechanical contrivances in the closet next to his bedroom. For the moment Charles did nothing directly, but later that month, a horseman reached Wilton, ordering the Earl to mend his behaviour or answer for it to the King.

For a little things went more smoothly for Henriette but, when her child was born and it proved to be a girl, she saw that there was no holding her husband's rage. After that, husband and wife decided each to go their own way and the Countess of Pembroke, recklessly extravagant, hated by the English equally with her sister, spent most of her time with the Court at Whitehall. Mme de Sevigné, who had never quite forgiven Louise for her success, wrote at this time to a friend : "As for England well, Mlle Kéroualle has not been disappointed. She set out to be the King's mistress and she has got her desire. With the full knowledge of the whole Court, he lodges with her almost every night. She has born him a son whom the King has acknowledged and has presented him with two duchies. She is amassing wealth and has made herself as much feared and respected as she could."

Nell too at this time, to the city's delight,

mindful of the mourning that Louise had worn for the King of Sweden, arrayed herself in full black and had her coach decorated with the symbols of mourning and drove through the city, lamenting the death of the King of Portugal.

London was delighted. The French whore was being put in her place. Nelly would show her what Englishmen—and women, too—thought of her. And alone, in the foggy climate she never grew accustomed to, with only the King and Danby to stand by her, Louise, with a splendid indifference, let it all pass; too scornful even to remark when Nell, imitating her, bought herself a sedan chair, the splendour of which can best be imagined by reading the bill for it.

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|----|----|----|
| The body of the chaire | 3 | 10 | 0 |
| The best neat's leather to cover the outside | 3 | 10 | 0 |
| 600 inside nails, coulered and burnisht | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| 600 guilt with water gold at 5s. per cent. | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| 1,200 outside nailes, the same gold at 8s. per cent. | 4 | 16 | 0 |
| 300 studds, the same gold | 1 | 16 | 0 |
| 2,000 half rooffe nailes, the same gold | 1 | 14 | 0 |
| 200 toppit nailes, same gold | 3 | 14 | 0 |
| 5 spriggs for the top, rich guilt | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| A haspe for the door, rich guilt | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| ffor change of 4 glasses | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 pound 5s. for one new glasse, to be abated out of that for a broken glasse 15s. | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| ffor guilding windows and irons | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| serge ffor the bottom | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| canvisse to put under the leather | 0 | | 0 |
| all sorts of iron nailes | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| workmanshipe, the chair inside and outside | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| | 34 | 11 | 0 |

Reict. dated 13 July 1675 for £30 in full discharge

In that summer, Richmond, now two years old, had, as his playmate, his cousin, Lady Charlotte Herbert; and the King, mindful of his child, appointed Lady Marshall his governess at a salary of £2000 a year. At the same time the £10,000 that Louise received from the wine licences was made a regular payment.

It was a generous sum, but it was not enough for Louise, who lost heavily at the card tables and whose passion for splendour seemed inexhaustible. Her ambition for her sister was as great and she was always importuning Pembroke to make her increased allowances; so much so that Pembroke, to Louise's fury, referred to her as "the grievance of the nation."

This year, too, the Comte and Comtesse de Kéroualle arrived in London and lodged with their old friend, Sir Richard Bruine, where Evelyn met them, speaking highly of them, praising the Comte for his fine military air and his wife for the remains of a great beauty and a fine intelligence.

But Louise did not stay near her parents for long. A week after Evelyn had written in his diary, the King, harassed by his councillors, posted down to Greenwich and boarded his yacht, the *Greyhound*. He sailed all that day and, anchoring that night, he was up at four the next morning and sailed off again. Gales blew him out of his course. He had no other security on board but his faith in himself and his trust to his own seamanship: and Pepys and the officials at the Admiralty, hearing no news of him, spent sleepless nights and gave him up as lost. On June 30th Louise, "come in her carriage, half-fainting with fear," drove down to the Admiralty, but they could give her no news and it was not until the first day of July that Charles set his subjects' minds at rest by coming to anchor off the Isle of Wight.

From there he made haste to Windsor, where Louise and the other ladies had driven to meet him, and, relieved beyond measure to have him with them again, they spent the rest of the month in quiet country pastimes. Lady Chaworth, who was of the party, wrote to a correspondent, describing a picnic they all attended: "All the Queen's servants treated her by everyone bringing her their dish, who then attended her into the forest, and she eat under a tree. Lady Bath's dish was a chine of beef, Mrs. Windham's a venison pasty, but Mr. Hall brought two dozen of ruffs and reeves and delicate baskets of fruit, Mr. Chiffinch, for his daughter's behalf, twelve dozen of choice wine. The Queen wonderfully pleased and merry and none but herself and servants."

Charles hunted in the park and planted trees, preparing for the meeting of the Houses when he must ask for more money. Louise, instructed by her master at Versailles, offered him Louis' assistance. For the moment Charles declined while the monarchs of one half of Europe held out bribes to him and the monarchs of the other half held them out to the Parliament men, to refuse the King supplies.

On October 13th, having spent the morning in the Duchess's apartments, listening to reasons why he should not apply to the Parliament for money, Charles met the Houses. His requests were refused. Spain and Holland had seen to it that no money was forthcoming for the building of ships or the paying of debts. One member, the spokesman of them all, blamed the King because he could not manage on the same allowance as Edward III.

For six weeks Charles, desperate, seeing in the Houses' refusal the destruction of his tiny navy and the end of all he had planned and worked for, thundered and wrangled. In high delight the



John Hayls

SAMUEL PEPYS

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

French Ambassador wrote to his master : " The King of England is hard put to it to get as much as even the cost of a dinner " ; until, at last, on November 22nd, utterly disgusted and almost despairing, Charles sent them home.

He saw much of Louise. Alone of the women she was able to understand and sympathize in his predicament. For five years now she had never been away from him, watching him hold together his country and his empire, building his small navy, furnishing his regiment of an army. For five years she had listened to the abuse of the Commons and the people of London now against herself, now against the King, now against both of them.

In the dark days before that Christmas, almost nightly, Charles, leaving the Court, came to Chiffinch's rooms, accompanied sometimes by Louise who urged him to tolerate no longer the insults and the meannesses of the Parliament men. Why be a king at all, she asked him once and Charles, kissing her gently, mindful of those months and years when, without the money to buy himself food, he had wandered, a beggar king, round the Courts of Europe, replied : " Better a poor king than no king at all."

In Chiffinch's room Shaftesbury urged him night after night to take the plunge and summon a new parliament ; but Charles relied on Danby who had not yet failed him and Danby believed that, with time and patience, he could get a working majority.

An odd sort of kingship, Louise must have thought and would be suddenly tender towards this man who was so splendid a lover and was so subtle and gay and brilliant and was bullied by half-wits.

Shaftesbury, traitor again, departed to his seat by the fire at a city coffee-house and from there circulated libels against the Court and the Duchess

and the other ladies. Charles, he whispered, was joining the Pope. The city growled savagely. The pack stirred in its lair. All over the land men, who had waited for news with anxious hearts when the King was at sea, whispered against him.

Charles, aware of the stir, acted swiftly. Suddenly, without warning, the coffee-houses were closed; the rebel councillors were ejected and Shaftesbury, surprisingly thoughtful for his tenants, set out for Dorset.

It was the end of another year. There was frost and snow and the deer in the park were fed by hand while men spoke longingly of the days of Oliver. There was no cheer that Christmas. The trade of the country that had been flourishing only a little before broke again now. Vagrants appeared on the roads. There were acts of violence and the town guard was called out.

In Whitehall they made what little cheer they could. But it was not much, for it seemed now that, after fifteen years of kingship, Charles was back where he had started with only this difference that, whereas at the first he had had an enthusiastic people behind him, now he was suspected and hated for every move he took.

On the other side of the Channel a woman, who might have married him fifteen years earlier, waited for the winter storms to abate, before she set sail.

But she brought no help with her; only an empty pocket—for she wore men's clothes—and an entrancing little black page.

CHAPTER VII

HORTENSE MANCINI

THE Duchess Hortense Mancini received a flattering welcome. She had been snubbed at the Court at Versailles and had spent the intervening months before her arrival in England on a hopeless quest round the Courts of Europe. Everywhere scandal had been associated with her name until, at last, furious with the reception she was receiving, she had bethought herself of the lover she had spurned when he too had been homeless and without a crown. In England, she was certain there would be a welcome for her. So to England she came. She was not disappointed in her hopes. Arlington and Montague, both of whom hated and had reason to hate the Duchess of Portsmouth, saw in the Italian a means whereby they could banish her for ever.

Hortense was paraded before the King. She had abandoned her male clothing and was dressed now in the height of fashion. Within ten days of Charles's meeting her, he had heard of her sufferings, of the treatment that had been meted out to her in France and of the appalling tyranny of her husband.

He was shocked and angry. It had never been in him to listen to the recital of a woman's wrongs unmoved ; for women were, to him, creatures that should be protected and helped and loved. Mazarin's husband had treated her shamefully and Charles, already in love with the lady again, demanded that Louis should compel him to make

her an allowance. There was fear in all French hearts. If once, it was argued, Charles was taken from Louise, the French cause was lost and England would be no longer an unacknowledged colony of the King at Versailles.

But they need not have worried. While Charles was neglecting Louise and languishing with Hortense, while Danby was cudgelling his brains how he could keep Portsmouth on hand, while Arlington and Montague were congratulating themselves and assuring their followers that the French dominion was over, Charles and Louise and Ruvigny concluded another bargain with France in the dark hours after the palace was gone to bed and only the guards stirred sleepily and Chiffinch waited, yawning his head off, in the King's closet.

By this treaty each King bound himself never to aid the enemies of the other ; and Charles, receiving something more substantial in view of the fact that it was the English alliance with the Dutch or the Spanish that must be abandoned for ever, slipped into his pocket two and a half million livres.

But it was a terrifying business, just these three at night settling the affairs of the kingdom and, in the end, when it came to the writing of the treaty, Danby's courage failed him and Charles wrote it with his own hand. "It will be difficult," Ruvigny wrote, "to conceive that a King should be so abandoned by his subjects that even among his ministers he cannot find one in whom he can place entire confidence."

Nevertheless the arrival of Hortense Mancini was a grievous blow to Louise. Hitherto, with the not very serious rivalry of the Cockney girls and the bad-tempered Cleveland, she alone had been able to hold the King's interest. Now Hortense had complicated matters and had started off with the great advantage of being a victim of circumstances.



Pierre Mignard

HORTENSE MANCINI AND HER SISTER

By gracious permission of H.M. the King. From the painting at Windsor Castle.

She was a niece of the great Cardinal Mazarin and, after her refusal of the penniless Prince Charles, she had been married to the son of Marshal de Meillerage, who received the title of Duc Mazarin and a dowry of twenty-eight millions of francs. He was a man of great wit and intelligence ; but, early in life, he became the victim of religious mania and his oddities and peculiarities were the delight of the French Court for the next fifty years.

He was the prey of any religiously worded humbug or crook who might always be certain that from him, no matter how poor his tale was, he could draw some part of his millions. Finally, his religion turned to a masochistic puritanism and he delighted in mutilating statues, daubing over beautiful pictures and even forbidding the women and girls on his estates to milk cows lest they have impure thoughts.

When Hortense gave birth to daughters, each more beautiful than the last, the scrupulous husband, afraid that their beauty might raise in them conceit and coquettish thoughts, wanted to pull out their front teeth. He gave up all personal preferment as he was afraid that it might be against the will of God, and his letters became filled with nothing but references to monks and saints and the feasts and fasts of the Church.

Finally, seizing on his wife in her beauty and in all the natural passion of her love, he had her shut up in a kind of aristocratic Magdalens' House—the Convent des Filles de Sainte Maries in the Rue Ste. Antoine. In the Convent the young Duchess met the Marquise de Courcelles, who was there as another enforced penitent. They quarrelled with the nuns, notably because the nuns would not allow them water with which to wash their feet. The nuns, secure in the knowledge of their own rightness, still refused water and the two noble

ladies, using the blankets of which they had often complained, escaped down the wall and through the window. Hortense and her maid, dressed as gentlemen and accompanied by the Chevalier de Rohan and one Courbeville, fled into Italy. Courbeville utterly and completely governed the Duchess so that she would do nothing without his permission to the scandal of the other high born ladies.

Finally, she returned to France, hoping against hope that her husband had relented and that they could live together again as two normal beings.

But the Duc was adamant. He had, it appeared, seen a vision. He knew his wife as a fallen angel. The whole host of heaven, he had heard, rejoiced more over one sinner that repented than over . . . And, in that case, Hortense must be made to repent. The last house of correction had been too easy. The nuns had let her have her own way too much. No water for her feet? Where he would send her now, there would be water for nothing but drinking. So she was packed off, protesting loudly, to the Abbey of Lys, near Melun, when the King, remembering her as the playmate of his youth, sent a constable and eight dragoons to force the Convent door and set her at liberty again. It was a triumph. The Duc had been defeated. The King himself had declared for her side. So she entered Paris in triumph in Colbert's coach, while the mob followed her, cheering; and the bourgeois threw flowers on her from the upper windows and the aristocracy kissed her and made much of her and then grew tired because of some new plaything that had arrived.

She went to Provence. At Aix she joined her sister, the Connetable de Colonna. They were two such beauties as it is the lot of man to meet but rarely. They had raven black hair and used no scent nor paint nor powder nor patches. And, luckier than most other women of ripe southern

beauty, theirs did not fade. It remained. It was as lovely, as perfect, as breathless when she rode to Whitehall as it had been fifteen years earlier when she had refused Charles's offer.

But at Aix the two sisters shocked the whole country-side. They were called madcaps. The good people demanded that they should be locked up. Mme Scudery voted for whipping them. The Countess de Soissons and the Duchess de Bouillon demanded that they should be put in a lunatic asylum; and, in the end, the town council of Aix threatened that they should be locked up in a convent for the protection of the young men's morals.

They escaped again. At this time their whole history reads like one long series of captures and escapes, each successive one getting more breathless and involved than the last. This time Hortense reached Savoy where she lived for three years with C  zar Vicard, a gallant who called himself the Abb   de St. Real, though he wore no tonsure and had never enjoyed a benefice.

He was a man of perfect wit and brilliance, a splendid lover for the Duchess and of such "utter and refined depravity" of habits that even Louvois, who was a past master in such things, was shocked and horrified when he read his letters.

When Hortense arrived in England, bent on stirring the old fire in Charles, she was followed a month or two later by the Abb  . She had learnt vice wherever she went and Ruvigny, who loathed her, was distressed to observe that "she is to all appearances a finely developed young girl. I never saw anyone who so well defies the power of time and vice to disfigure. At the age of fifty she will have the satisfaction of thinking, when she looks in her mirror, that she is as lovely as she ever was in her life."

The reception was triumphant. Even before the King had met her, York gave a ball in her honour, where Sunderland presented her with the King's compliments. De Gramont, convinced that in her wake he would find and maintain fortune, set up as her social adviser. In his rapture he was so unwise as to tell the French Ambassador that, compared to her, all the other mistresses were as nothing.

But, if the men were enthusiastic, the women were horrified. Nell Gwynn, ever making a joke of things and ever certain of her own position, went into mourning for Portsmouth's dead hopes. Cleveland retired to the country. Moll Davies and the other meaner beauties fluttered round her, flattering her, paying her court, as they saw in her the only possible means of despatching Louise.

But Cleveland did not stay long in the country. On February 3rd, Ruvigny wrote to Pomponne that she had decided to visit France. Already, it appeared, her creditors were overwhelming her. But, nevertheless, bankrupt or not, she intended to make a good showing, for she was taking the two young Dukes, her sons, two carriages and many horses. Ruvigny suggested that all honour should be paid her and that she should be exempted from all customs duties. The franchise was granted, but the terms in which it was written were not suitable to the irritable woman who, in a tantrum, burst into Charles's room, showing him the passport, in which the two boys (being of the blood royal) had not been styled cousins of Louis. Charles, she insisted, must remonstrate with the French. But the King was weary of her. For years he had suffered too much from her vituperative anger. Now, when at last he saw an opportunity of getting rid of her, he saw no reason why he should enter into other quarrels on her behalf. He did nothing.

The Duchess, in a fury, tore up the passport and declared she would rather pay any amount of tax than be snubbed that way. She set sail with de Grammont. But the customs officers, warned by Ruvigny, took care not to ask any questions and, instead, overwhelmed her with civilities.

Charles, enchanted by his new mistress, forgot both the Duchess and Louise. In April the Court, as was its custom, moved to Newmarket ; but this year, for the first time since she had arrived at his shores, the King failed to reserve an apartment for Louise and she was forced to take a house in a neighbouring village. She was ill and tired. Her beauty had faded and she rarely saw Charles, who was out on the heath, watching his horses, riding himself or hunting over the soft, flat country. At this time of her illness, her steward, whom she had trusted completely and against whom she would never hear a word said, robbed Louise of £12,000 and decamped with her jewels. She applied to the King, but Charles had no attention to give her. Her grief and worry brought on a miscarriage and in the summer she was delivered of a still-born child.

The Duchess Mazarin was in the same financial straits. From the first she had thrown herself on Charles's generosity with the result, as we have seen, that he applied to Louis on her behalf. The French King, not surprisingly, took no notice, and on April 16th Ruvigny wrote again, telling His Majesty that, by persuading the lady's husband to grant her an allowance, he would be pleasing the King of England mightily. But Louis, who, despite the Duc's peculiarities, had a great liking and respect for him, refused to meddle in family matters and himself wrote to the Duchess explaining his reason. Ruvigny, who handed her the letter, was the recipient of all her ill favour and anger. Charles

meanwhile, generous as ever while money lasted, made her out a private order on the Privy Purse of a thousand gold jacobus; while Ruvigny, who thought it dangerous to vex a woman whose star was in the ascendant, entered into another campaign against the Duc.

But if Charles had money to give his mistresses, he had none for the use of his country. Parliament had voted him nothing. The money that dribbled in from Versailles was too quickly spent on paying off old personal debts, and making some little provision for the time being. All over the country men grumbled. The Faithful Commons, returned to their constituents, appalled them by tales of the licentiousness and vice at the Court at Whitehall. The King's name was bandied from mouth to mouth, all men vilifying it, while, at Windsor, at Newmarket, at Whitehall, the King stood alone. "The Parliaments are to be feared," Ruvigny wrote, "and it is like a miracle to see a king, without arms, resist them so long."

A drunken courtier at Whitehall shouted out that one day, when all had forsaken the King, he would climb on the statue at Charing Cross and watch Charles with Will Chiffinch and the Sergeant Trumpeter standing alone against the three kingdoms: "For, by God, he would have no one else."

But the King was never as alone as was Louis at Versailles. Always at the back of him he had the secret people of whom Chesterton has written, the men and women who had saved him in the past, who had hidden him in their cellars and in their hearts, who had laughed with him and camped with him and watched him ride his horses to victory and waited, breathless with agony and suspense, while he sailed in a tiny yacht and was lost at sea; and waited in an equal agony and suspense while

Louise worked her wiles and James did his best, by his heavy stupidity, to ruin the Kingdom.

He was not alone. Governments and merchants and bankers and the civil councillors and shifty Buckingham and brother James all might desert him, but there were always the jockeys at Ned Griffin's, the orange girls in the theatres (had not Nell been an orange girl?), the keepers in the parks, the men of science and the men of letters and old faithful Clifflinch, as he welcomed the King home at night.

In this summer others were joined against Louise. Mary of Modena, great with child and confined to her bed, had Hortense Mancini sit by her side day after day, discussing the evils of the Frenchwoman. Thither, with a sudden affection for his sister-in-law, came Charles, sitting with the two ladies and entering with zest into their plans that, after York and his wife had moved to St. James's, Hortense should be given their suite of rooms. Ruvigny was alarmed at Hortense's success. "Sir," he wrote, "I have just learned that there are certain and secret intelligence between the King of England and the Duchess Mazarin. She carries on her intrigue very quietly with him. Those who hoped to share in the triumph have not yet had the opportunity they expected." And four days later, after both Charles and James had approached him to try to procure Hortense a bigger pension, he wrote: "Charles shows a deepening interest in the lady; and it may be that her state of distress will intensify the passion which now clearly overmasters him."

But Louis would have nothing of it. He had, he considered, done quite enough for a woman who had never done anything for him except bring him trouble. Furthermore, even if her poverty did incline the King of England towards her, to grant

her an income would mean that she could stay in England for ever and effectually block the way of Louise.

He replied to Ruvigny suggesting that perhaps he was not the man to deal with an affair of this kind and that he was sending over Honore Clourtin, Seigneur de Chanteroine, who had been Councillor of the Parliament of Rouen at the age of fourteen.

Honest old Ruvigny was relieved. He realized that he was no more fitted than the King to deal with these feminine plans. He was too old, too steeped in affairs of state to regard these matters which were of such moment to women as more than trifles.

He waited impatiently for Clourtin's arrival.

Meanwhile Louise, maddened with anger and jealousy, had travelled down to Tunbridge Wells, where she had stayed so often with the Court and where now, in its remoteness and quietude, it seemed possible that she might be able to rest until the King was ready to return to her.

She sent her servants ahead, bidding them procure the house in which she had last stayed, while she came on a day or two later, watching the English country-side coming to meet her, the flowers of Kent and the rich, heavy trees and the cattle grazing so peacefully. If she stayed away long enough, Charles would come to her. He needed her. He could not get on without her, despite the carnal joys of Nell and Hortense and the others.

But, arrived at the Wells, she found that the insults and the covert sneers had travelled before her. The house she had wanted was taken already by the Marchioness of Worcester ; and her servants had been forced to procure her another. Louise was furious. She had hoped so much from this holiday. She had planned it to be a time of rest

and happiness and preparation and, at the first, she had been snubbed.

In a fury of anger she sent Lady Worcester a note, remarking that she was surprised that she had been so far lacking in courtesy as not to give place to someone of so much greater importance than herself. The answer returned, cruel and stinging, digging up all that had been buried and lost, as she thought, in the past, that titles derived from prostitution were never recognized among Lady Worcester's friends. "And when a Lady so lowers herself as to lose her virginity to the Comte de Sault . . ."

It should have been forgotten. Louise herself had almost forgotten it; something away there in the past, before she had known what life was, when she had been only a girl out for experience or fun or call it what you would.

She threw herself on her bed and wept. She had been deserted again. She was alone again, utterly and completely and terribly alone, as the child that is yet unborn or the star that has not yet risen. All had deserted her, Charles and Ruvigny and her own people and even a woman like Lady Worcester might insult her with impunity, while from Whitehall there came merry tales of the gay supper parties held in Hortense's rooms; of the mad assemblies at the orange girl's house in Pall Mall; of how Charles, seeing a man stand on his head on the top of a church spire, had offered to grant him a patent that no one else might do the same thing.

All this in Whitehall while at Tunbridge Wells, as though she had never been the uncrowned Queen, in an agony of uncertainty and suspense, lest her reign be over for ever, La Belle Bretonne waited, fuming in her impatience, the recipient of the scarce-veiled sneers of the townspeople.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRENCH ASSAULT

THE New Year saw Courtin installed at Whitehall. He was of a very different disposition from honest, Protestant Ruvigny who had become so alarmed at the habits of the ladies. He was, moreover, a man of integrity, so that, when Governor of Picardy he showed no hesitation in accepting an application from the Duc de Chaulnes that a number of the villages on his estate might be freed from the payment of tax. But, when he discovered that, on account of this exemption, the other villages under his jurisdiction were ground down with taxes, he, from his own pocket, paid forty thousand livres into the Treasury and resigned his post. He was blessed with good humour, a ready wit and tongue and exquisite manners. He was diminutive in stature, so that his robes of office ill became him : but, ridiculous as he must have appeared sometimes, he never allowed his manners to be impaired and he was very gallant to all ladies.

But he was mighty cautious. On accepting the offer of the work in England from Louis he made minute inquiries into the state of the country, the habits of the people there and the reasons why poor old Ruvigny was so anxious to depart.

A late Maid of Honour to Queen Catharine—whose name we are not told—but who was staying in a convent in the Faubourg St. Germain, became his informant, pleasing him enormously by her

knowledge of the affairs of the Court so that he wrote to Louvois, describing her as "as good merchandise as I have seen for a long time," and adding that "if he had plenty of money and as many affairs as he had, she should not escape him."

He was not altogether a stranger to the young lady : for he had dined with her previously at de Gourville's and he had received information that she had left the Court on account of the unfortunate birth of a child while she was sitting in the Maids of Honour's waiting-rooms.¹

Having gleaned all he could from the lady, Courtin, ever mindful of any other transactions he could carry out and it having been suggested by Louis that he might be helpful, he visited the Duc Mazarin, whose priestly ears were being appalled by the tales of his wife's shame at Whitehall. Mazarin suggested certain terms for the persuasion of the lady to return home : but as these included "the retirement of his wife to the Abbey of Mont Martre" Courtin shook his head, politely informed him that he was a fool and made his departure. From that time onwards, biased by the Duc's behaviour, he was a firm supporter of Hortense. He supported her in all her schemes, laughed at the discomfiture of Portsmouth, and did his utmost to persuade Louis to take a kindly view of her. He visited her frequently, watching her progress at the Court and noting how much more favourable the English were to her than Louise. Finally, he—as Ruvigny had done—wrote to his master that he should try to persuade the Duc to agree to Hortense's demands, as she was afraid that His

¹ This, Forneson tells us, was not the same young lady whose child, having been born as inconsequently as the puppies of Charles's spaniels, afterwards died and served as a dissecting subject for Charles—who claimed the paternity.

Majesty had heard evil tales of her "so that it is to be feared, if she obtains any influence here, that she will not employ it as Your Majesty might desire."

A little later, in a letter to Louise, he mentioned that he had seen the Lady at High Mass in the chapel of the Portuguese Ambassador: but he had not been able to help noticing the disgust she showed at the length of the service. He spoke to her again. Seeking out the Abbé de St. Real, who still lingered waiting for the crumbs that might fall from King Charles's table, he led him into talking about her and he grew more and more uneasy at her rising influence. In the end, with a courage and a rare delicacy, he questioned Charles on his own feelings to be informed that "he had much affection for her, but that he should not allow himself to be won over by the cabals which were being formed to entangle him with her." But he said, qualifying his former statement, that she was a great beauty and he found no pleasure equal to converse with her. Towards Louise, on the other hand, Charles showed only indifference, never asking about her nor showing the least interest when others discussed her. And, Courtin argued, sitting in his chamber, as he penned his despatches to Louis, if Charles were to fall a prey to the Italian, putting her in the place of the Frenchwoman, the loss to France, politically, might be very serious. The English, too, at this time hated the French with a deeper hatred than ever: and, in London, mistaking an unfortunate Venetian for a Frenchman, they made to throw him into the Thames and were only prevented by the arrival of some of their victim's friends.

Mazarin, Courtin urged, must be bought at any price. Whether she denied conjugal rights to her husband mattered not at all—but what did matter,

from the French point of view, was that Louis should see that she received the fifty thousand livres for which she stipulated. An Abbey must be given to St. Real and thus he would be placated.

The whole Court was a whispering gallery of gossip and slander against the Duchess and of hope that the Mazarin would take her place. Frenchmen, Courtin realized, walking among the courtiers, taking his snuff, making pretty speeches, must look to themselves and the future of the alliance with England.

But in Versailles Louis still hesitated. He was, he remembered, above the quarrels of men. He was a king, of a kingship that had never been known before. The quarrels between a man and his wife were as nothing to him—and Louise had been his choice. He spoke to Louvois about it. He hinted that he would be better pleased if Louvois wrote to Courtin, suggesting that that Minister should have Louise brought back from the Wells; and he heard, half-angrily, half-scornfully, that Courtin had written to the Duc. It was a poor letter, doing nothing but rousing that little Frenchman to a greater pitch of anger than ever against his wandering, reckless wife. In it, Courtin said insolently that the Lady feared she would find the seclusion at Montmartre irksome: that her strength was not equal to the severe rules of the sisters. Playfully, he begged that Monsieur would have pity.

And then, no longer good-humoured, with a menace that his position was not sufficient to enforce, he said the Duchess still took her stand on the original conditions when Madame de Montespan had been trying to patch up the quarrel between herself and the Duc. Under no conditions whatever would she consent to give him conjugal rights: and the only demand she made was that an annual

pension of fifty thousand livres should be granted to her ; and her laces, jewels and furniture sent to her and all idea of locking her up in a convent abandoned for ever.

Further, wrote Courtin, now stupefied by the sense of the excellence of his own composition, the Duchess was not likely to be willing to agree to any such ridiculous suggestions as her husband had to make, seeing that she had a charming set of rooms at St. James's, the friendship of the Duchess of York and the rest of the Court to wait upon her.

A week later came the Duc's reply. It was lengthy : no less than eight pages. It was pompous and unctuous and it was the delight of the Mazarin's circle for weeks afterwards. His reasons for her return were theological : of a theology that would have delighted an assembly of clergy : but that, to an emancipated beauty, meant nothing. . . . Another letter followed and then another and at last Courtin suggested to Pomponne that the letters should be given to some poor clerk to use as sermons.

Meanwhile, however, the Abbé de St. Real was only too anxious to get away from London. Every day that he spent there, seeing his mistress so intimate with the King, so courted on all sides, was agony to his jealous mind. He begged Courtin to act, and some time in August, without any explanation or excuse, he disappeared to Paris. In October Louvois wrote to demand the reason of this. How was it, he asked, that a man so enamoured of his mistress, had left her so suddenly ? For three months Courtin did not reply. He was too busy on other things. His despatches at that time were filled with business, so that he had not the space or the time to devote to a foolish lover. However, in January he wrote that the Abbé had spent all his time in England, sitting alone, with a woe-begone

countenance on the chimney corner of the room nearest the card-room. He had no friends. For himself no one wanted him and Hortense was away from him, living in commodious apartments, surrounded by admirers. In despair he took the road to Dover and passed out of England for ever, and, as completely, out of Hortense's mind.

On July 4th Louise, having spent forty days at Bath, which she had visited after leaving the Wells, returned to Whitehall. She was better in health now. While away she had drunk much milk and eaten the sweets for which Bath was famous. She had sat on the Parade, then very much as it is to-day, watching the country people as they passed up and down and planning her return.

Rumours reached her from London. Hortense was installed in St. James's. Her lover had left her. The King was always in her company. The new French Minister seemed to find her vastly attractive. She returned to conquer and was met by the jeers of Nell Gwynn, the open loathing of the people and the covert sneering of those who had made the Mazarin their champion. Driving through the English summer from Bath she had arrived at Windsor where the Court then was and halted there to dine. Dinner over she waited, tired and hurt because Charles had seemed so indifferent. But she waited in vain. No bed was offered and the Duchess was forced to drive on to London. It was the first public humiliation : and, while it left the rest of the world full of delight and glee, the woman who was slighted felt utterly broken.

But she did not show it. With a rare courage she took everything in her hands. She waited three days. She heard all the tales that people had to tell her. She made her preparations. The vulgarity of Nell : the heavy charms of Mazarin

might be all very well. She knew that she had only to wait. She knew Charles as none of the other mistresses knew him. . . . She knew his fickleness, his need to lean on some prop, and she knew, too, that none of the others could provide that prop.

Three days later, in a room heavy with precious scents, eating off gold plate which was not yet paid for, she invited Ruvigny and his wife and Charles himself to dinner.

They came while Courtin wondered and Mazarin was blind with fury and Nell laughed that the French where had a way with her.

There were musicians at the dinner: those of Louis XIV's own chamber played to them; Giles, Laforest, Godenesche; and Lambert, the father-in-law of Lulli, accompanied them on the spinet. Louise told them to sing:

"Mate me con no mirar,
Mas no me mate con celos"¹

and Charles joined in the laughter against himself that the request evoked.

But he only saw her in public. It seemed now that all his private hours were taken up with the Mazarin while he took pains to pretend to Louise that he cared not one jot for her. About this time, too, Louise had the misfortune to black her eye, and the whole Court fell to work, making very poor puns at her attempt to turn herself into a brunette like Mazarin.

The reign of the Duchess of Portsmouth seemed to have come to an end. On August 6th Courtin wrote to his Master: "I witnessed yesterday evening an incident which aroused in me the greatest pity imaginable, and which perhaps would have touched you, all wise and virtuous, though

¹ Make me die of grief but not of jealousy.

you are. I went to Mme de Portsmouth's apartments. She opened her heart to me in the presence of her two waiting maids of whom you, perhaps, knew one named Bellex, who was formerly in the service of the Comtesse du Plessis. The two maids remained *glued* against the wall with downcast eyes. The mistress shed a torrent of tears, and her sighs and sobs interrupted her words. In short, never has a spectacle appeared to me more sad and more touching. I remained with her until midnight, and I neglected nothing to restore her courage and to make her understand how much it was to her interest to dissemble her grief."

Louvois replied: "The scene of the *Signora adoranda* has much diverted His Majesty. I am sure that she very much entertained you first."

But, in reality, it was no joke for Louis. If Louise fell at the Court of Whitehall it was certain that her eclipse would be regarded as a weakening of Louis' own influence over Charles through the principalities of Europe: and, as Louis was, at this time, negotiating a peace with the Dutch, provided they broke off their alliances with every other European Power, he could not afford to lose his most influential ambassador.

Courtin, aware of this, wrote Louis letters telling him that once more Louise was in Charles's graces; giving him a very misleading account of her reception at Windsor and adding that Charles had promised to attend her gatherings on Sundays. But, at the same time, he did all he could to keep friendly with Mazarin. The Countess of Sussex, one of Charles's daughters by the Duchess of Cleveland, now became greatly enamoured of the beautiful Italian. And, in the Countess's rooms, Charles met Hortense day after day. While he was there no one else was allowed to enter the rooms. "Mme de Mazarin," wrote Courtin at

the end of July, "is there at all hours. She even passed last night there, and I find that Mme de Mazarin is very satisfied with the result of the conversation which she had with the King."

So Courtin, assured now of the relationship between Charles and Hortense, did all he could to make her less antagonistic to the Court of France. He spent much time in her company, seeing her daily, paying her extravagant compliments ("If you had seen her dancing the furlong to the guitar, you could not have prevented yourself from altogether espousing her cause"), that Louvois grew suspicious and suggested that he, too, wished to have a share in her bed.

Courtin hastily assured him that such was not the case, although he added artfully: "The poor Ambassador of Portugal is dying for the love of her."

On November 2nd Courtin wrote again that, although Charles was often with Louise, it seemed he was on no more intimate terms than the majority of her visitors, and, for his part, he imagined that the King slept more frequently with the bawdy Nell Gwynn. Indeed, he added, the rest of the Court was assured that the King "was content to live very virtuously with Mme de Portsmouth," but "as for what concerns Mme de Mazarin I know that he considers her the most beautiful woman he has ever beheld. Although I visit her every day, I perceive that she conceals from me as much as possible, and I am the most deceived person in the world if there is not some political intrigue here."

But Courtin had a new scheme in his mind. A little later he suggested that there was a woman even more beautiful than Hortense who might be used by His Gracious Majesty. "I am going to see Mme Middleton who is the most beautiful woman in England and the most amiable. I

should give her all your money,¹ if she were willing to listen to me : but she once refused a purse of fifteen hundred which M. de Grammont offered her. So I have no fear of your Treasure.”

Later he wrote : “ As regards Mme Middleton, I have never seen a woman in any foreign country that has appeared to me more amiable. She is very beautiful : she has an air of the best breeding about her : it would be impossible to have more intelligence than she has : and her demeanour is modest and unassuming. In a word, Monsieur, if I were your age, I believe that I should not be able to help falling in love with her. But I shall soon be forty-nine and I am beginning to be very much inconvenienced by the thickness of the London air. . . . Mme Middleton, to whom I said that you desired to have her portrait, notified to me that she was very much beholden to you. . . . Thus, Monsieur, you see that you stand very well with her, who is beholden the most beautiful in England. It only remains to you to be the same with her who is the most amiable in France and I counsel you not to lose the opportunity of profiting by it.”

At Whitehall all was gaiety. The only serious person was the French Ambassador. The only sad one was Louise. But, obeying the word of Courtin, Louise dried her tears and on September 21st Courtin was able to write : “ She has just given our Embassy a splendid dinner, to which Mme Middleton, the Prince of Monaco, Sunderland, Sessac and other people were all invited. The King of England, who had dined with the Queen, dropped in while we were at table and I have as good as engaged him to come soon and dine with me. He has also been good enough to say that he will dine next Sunday with the same company at the

¹ Fund established for the corruption of M.Ps.

Duchess of Portsmouth's. . . . The Prince of Monaco cannot complain that everyone does not try to find pastime for him. I had him to dinner early in the week with the Duchess Mazarin and her dear friend, Lady Sussex, and a few days previously he came also to dinner to meet the Duchess of Portsmouth and Mrs. Middleton. The latter is, of all the English beauties, the one I have most pleasure in seeing. But what a number of watch dogs around her ! ”

So the year passed into autumn and Englishmen waxed merry as they thought of the fate of Portsmouth, though, in all conscience, they had little enough else to be merry about. The country was up to the hilt in debt. The only people who had money to spend were those at the French Embassy, but even there it was not so plentiful that Louvois would allow Courtin to spend the balance of a six months' budget on erecting a chapel. Courtin was disappointed. At the end of the year Louise came out of her seclusion and told him that Charles and the Mazarin had reached some secret understanding. Courtin fell into a panic. Whatever it was that the Duchess suspected, she suspected it honestly, and the Ambassador wrote bitterly that his warnings to his Government had been neglected as idle ; and that his Government had haggled over the supplementary pension of eight thousand crowns which the King had asked for the Mazarin. There would, he supposed pessimistically, be reason to regret this : the lady was very depressed and would take measures to get her revenge. And he begged Louvois that he would treat the matter seriously, adding that the Duchesse Mazarin always spoke of him amiably and was most charming and that Louvois must one day have the pleasure of seeing her dancing.

On November 2nd he gave an account of a dinner

at Mrs. Middleton's with many remarks on the beauties of ladies' feet, ankles, shoes and stockings. "I cannot endure Paris stockings or the shoes furnished to our ladies by Mme Desbardes. There is nothing neater than the feet and ankles of English ladies in their well fitting shoes and silk stockings. They wear their skirts short and I often see legs so well turned that a sculptor would like to mould them. Green silk stockings are modish. The garter, of which glimpses are often afforded, is below the knee and in black velvet, with diamond buckles. Those who have no silk stockings to wear show a white skin, smooth and satiny."

The Earl of Sussex, however, was not one of those who regarded Mme Mazarin as all that was perfect, and he arrived in Whitehall from Hurstmonceaux Castle, backed up by the Duchess of Cleveland, demanding that the young wife should return home.

Lady Sussex was disconsolate. No more than a child, she wept at the thought of leaving her beloved Mazarin. Charles, who could never hurt a woman, told her she could stay : thereby enraging Cleveland again, who was of opinion that her daughter encouraged the affair between the King and Hortense.

Courtin, with all a Frenchman's zeal, wrote accounts of these happenings to Louvois and His Majesty, who begged him, in future despatches, not to neglect them.

But although Courtin wrote so knowledgeably of the affairs of Court, and was, unlike Louvois, completely free from pomposity, he had no real knowledge of the country in which he was living. He had no interest in England as a land with a past or a future or a soul. His whole interest in it lay in holding it back while Louis was conquering

in Flanders and the Netherlands. The Court bounded the Ambassador's interest. Beyond the Court he knew nothing, cared nothing : and for those outside his immediate circle, he had no concern.

When John Churchill, who was later to become the famous Duke of Marlborough, applied to Louis for a regiment, it was Courtin who could find in him no more than a selfish, cool-headed libertine. In reply to questions asked him all Courtin could say was that he had traded on his good looks and handsome figure in the court circle. Yet Churchill, when he applied to Louis, did so in all probability in order to escape from the titled old women to whom he owed what money and advancement he possessed. He had, by this time, fallen deeply and passionately in love with Sarah Jennings, the famous beauty who led the Duchess of York's household. According to a letter of Courtin's, written on December 7th, 1676, Sarah had left a dance at a ball to which she had promised a partner, to sit down and weep : for Churchill had told her that he was menaced with consumption and must depart to live in France. Sarah believed him although, at the time, he was in perfect health : but his parents were urging him to marry an heiress who was so ugly as to be literally deformed. Courtin, however, gathering his information from backstairs gossip, wrote to Louvois that Churchill had robbed the Duchess of Cleveland, taking from her so much of her money and valuables that she had been forced to flee to the South of France in order to economize and gain time in which to pay her creditors.

Possibly, Louvois suggested, if the young gentleman came to France he would meet Cleveland again, and become a valuable instrument of France : but, at the same time, remembering the gay stories about the young man, he suggested that

"he was too fond of pleasure to discharge well the duties of Colonel in the King of France's army." And, added Louvois, his biting pen getting the better of his diplomacy, he would give "more satisfaction to a rich and faded mistress than to a monarch who did not want to have dishonourable and dishonoured knights in his armies."

At the end of the year Louise had fallen to the very lowest pitch of her position.

She was neglected by Charles, who never saw her save in public and, irked beyond endurance by his preference for the other women, she reproached him for drinking twice to the health of Nell Gwynn in twenty-four hours, while Nell, probably realizing the value of the French woman as the butt of her wit, continued to make fun of her, causing her life to be utterly miserable.

There was one thing, however, which had raised Nelly's wrath and which, at the end of the year, she proceeded to see was altered. The titles which had been given to the sons of the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Cleveland had filled her with jealousy that her own child had received no such mark of favour. But it was not in the orange girl's nature to demand satisfaction outright. Her own reputation for the smallness of her demands denied that. Cleveland and Portsmouth, by their eternal application for honours and preferment, had turned the whole world against them: and Nell, gay as she may have been, was shrewd enough to realize that in the smallness of her demands lay much of her popularity. Accordingly, therefore, she made no direct request to Charles. As the young Dukes played about the Court and as their mothers proudly boasted of them, Nell received the King in her own apartments.

She was in no good humour. The honours paid to the sons of her rivals stirred all the jealousy in

her. Charles found her a dull and waspish companion. As he was leaving, she sent for her eldest son and greeted him testily: "Come here, you little bastard." Charles, who hated to hear any child abused, remonstrated with her. But Nell was in no mood to be trifled with: "What should I call him?" she asked, "I have no better name to call him by." "Then I must give him one," Charles laughed and, two days after Christmas, Charles Beauclerk was created Baron Headington and Earl of Burford.

"Never," opined Cunningham, "was a peerage sought in so witty and abrupt a manner and never was a plea for one so immediately admitted."

Early in the New Year, the young Earl was betrothed to the Lady Diana Vere, the daughter of Aubrey de Vere, the last Earl of Oxford: and years later Kneller was to paint her portrait and Lord Halifax write verses in her honour.

"The line of Vere so long renowned in arms
Concludes with lustre in St. Albans' charins;
Her conquering eyes have made their race compleat;
They rose in valour and in beauty set."

But the beginning of the New Year saw Charles harassed this time not only by the political situation, but by the quarrels of the ladies, again facing his Parliament. On February 15th the King drove down to the House, to make his speech. It was a model of tact and firmness. "First, I do expect and require of you that all occasions of difference between the two Houses be carefully avoided. . . . In the next place, I desire you to consider the necessity of building more ships and how much all our safeties are concerned in it."

But the appeal for money fell on deaf ears. For weeks the Opposition Lords had been flooding the city with pamphlets, explaining that, by an act of

Edward III, any parliament that had not sat for a year was automatically dissolved. One after another, "in great bravery and liveries of blue," Buckingham, Salisbury and Shaftesbury argued this weighty point. They were received in ill part. The supreme tactlessness which allowed them to inform any public body, summoned from the ends of the kingdom, that it did not exist and might, at its own expense, return, met with a demand for an apology and withdrawal. The Opposition Lords held fast to their point and, at the end of the month, they were lodged in the Tower.

In the Lower House Danby's policy again seemed to triumph. Samuel Pepys, who had spent the day before the opening of Parliament, at the theatre, admiring an actress's figure, made a great speech, extolling the virtues of the Stuarts who, he said, had made the building of the English fleet possible. Inspired and excited, the House voted £600,000—which was just three-quarters of what the Admiralty had demanded.

Abroad Louis' armies conquered mightily. St. Omer, Valenciennes and Cambrai were captured. The Lords of the Opposition, fearful at the French victories, petitioned Charles to take a thought for "the interest of Europe."

But Charles, still fond of Louise, still hopeful of further grants from the Most Christian King, refused to enter the war, remembering how, at Versailles, there was lodged his receipt written in his own bold handwriting: "I have received from His Most Christian Majesty, at the hands of M. Courtin, the sum of 100,000 crowns, French money, for the second quarter, ending on the last day of June, and to be deducted from the 400,000 crowns payable at the end of this year."

"Given at Whitehall, Sept. 25, 1676.

"CHARLES R."

The four hundred thousand pounds was the price of the prorogation of Parliament that, said the Lords, by not meeting all that year, had dissolved itself.

The assembly of the Houses in February, however, found Versailles nervous. The French trump-card, the Duchess of Portsmouth, had been played and had fallen. Money was paid into English banks and Courtin received his instructions to buy those members of the Houses who were any way purchasable. He had a hard job. The members, suspicious that they had not been assembled for so long, were anxious to guard their rights as firmly as possible. French gold, no matter to whom it was paid, was synonymous in their minds with their own prorogation.

Desperately, Courtin, clad in his best breeches and come from writing frantic notes to Louvois, called on the Royal Mistresses. Louise, whom he had neglected for so long, suddenly became the recipient of his favours. The Mazarin, approached by him, but remembering the treatment she had received in France, laughed in his face.

At last came Berkshire, slinking like some low cur of a fox, remembering how, by his lying and tricks, he had received one thousand gold pieces from Ruvigny. Fawning, with the doors shut, his mouth full of fine phrases and high-sounding names, the Earl suggested himself as a secret agent. He was, he informed Courtin, well at the front of things. He dined at the King's table. He might very well sleep with the King's cast-off mistress. Nothing would be hid from him. . . . And the price—

But Courtin recoiled. He was the soul of honour himself, serving his King to the best of his ability, and the suggestions of Berkshire seemed altogether appalling. He thanked him politely, but the King of France, he said, was well equipped with agents.

The Earl persisted. Louis agreed that he should be paid a thousand jacobus. Courtin temporized : till, at last, on condition that the Earl would oppose any anti-French speech made in the Upper House, he paid him a quarter of the amount named.

In March Courtin wrote to Pomponne, begging him to tell His Majesty that, though he had received the money, he had not paid it out to any of those who came asking him : as he knew that, whatever they promised, as soon as they had the money in their pockets and their feet on the floor of the house, they would betray their payer as now they were willing to betray their country.

But at Versailles they were disgusted by Courtin's scruples. At the end of the year, before the Assembly of Parliament, he had been caused to enter into relations with Coleman, one of the Secretaries of State and a great favourite of York's, who was to be bribed with three hundred jacobus. At the same time he received instructions to bribe Lauderdale : but this he found impossible and Louis, remembering the power of Louise over Charles, ordered that Lauderdale be approached through his wife. But Courtin was alarmed. Honest Lauderdale had not acquired his sobriquet without good reason. Even his worst enemy denied that he could be bought, and his wife, though extravagant and fond of plenty of money, was a cautious woman, who was only too anxious that her husband should stand well in the eyes of Parliament. She refused the bribe and the wretched Ambassador was set all of a twitter lest the rumour that he had offered it get abroad and Parliament would be more anti-French than before. Accordingly, with all haste, he sent an express to Louis, suggesting that the King might send the lady some elegant jewellery and other trinkets which, he, Courtin, would try to persuade her to accept.

The attack on Charles was a different matter. Here there was no beating about the bush, Courtin telling him bluntly that the continuance of the payments from France depended entirely on the King's own behaviour. But the Ministers required gentler handling : and Courtin informed Pomponne that the most efficacious present he had yet found was half a dozen bottles of champagne or French brandy that, consumed in the company of other members after a session, generally guaranteed the formation of some new cabal not averse to France.

But the members returned after the Easter recess more difficult than before. Bribed by Courtin to prevent anti-French measures, they had been bribed by the European Allies to induce Charles to enter the war. They stormed and abused. Screaming that the country should be protected by an adequate army, they refused the King money to settle that army : until, at last, at the end of May, a furious monarch threw his handkerchief in the air and cried : " I care just that for Parliament."

A week later, in a dignified but still angry speech, he closed the session and sent the gentlemen packing to their constituencies.

In a stormy interview with Courtin he showed that he knew that Louis had bribed the members and, to Courtin's offer of £100,000 for a dissolution, he replied that he must have at least twice that amount.

Meanwhile, to the dismay of Courtin and Louise, there arrived at Harwich a gentleman named Bentinck from the household of the Prince of Orange, who, remembering a suggestion of Arlington's, was anxious to ally himself permanently with England through a marriage with his cousin, Mary, the eldest daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York.

Danby and Charles, furious with Louis, saw in

this marriage a thing of great popular appeal. They gave Bentinck a great welcome, seeing that the match might produce a Protestant heir. The only person who openly objected was James : but, as Charles said : " God's Fish. He *must* consent."

Bentinck returned. Courtin, suspicious, had dust thrown in his eyes and met Charles daily at their conferences until on July 26th Charles had obtained a promise of £150,000, on condition that Parliament did not meet till the following April. Courtin, worried because he had been forced to pay the very highest he was allowed, became frantic when Charles, by a trick, obtained another £50,000 from him. He rushed to Charles, waving his hands, only to find the King apparently as distressed as he was, protesting that finance was beyond him and crying : " For God's sake do not speak to me of this affair. Go to the Treasurer and do as you and he shall understand the matter : as to myself, I am driven to despair whenever it is mentioned to me."

But the money paid to Charles kept the country at peace. " In August, while his Cousin of France and his Cousin of Orange fought, marched and counter-marched across Flanders, the King of peaceful England spent a fortnight at sea."¹

For nine days in his yacht he was caught in a furious storm, so that the people of Plymouth gave him up for lost and when, at length on the tenth day, his boat dropped anchor, the people awakened from their beds, fired off the guns, the Mayor and Aldermen came down to meet him, and Charles knighted the leading gentry.

Meanwhile at Whitehall, Courtin, courteous, charming and utterly happy, was flitting like some gaily coloured butterfly among the ladies. For the first time since her arrival in England, Louise had

¹ Bryant.

been neglected in the political intrigues of the realm. All of Charles's negotiations for that year with Louis had been conducted without her aid and, often, without her cognisance. The arrival and the accession of the Mazarin had placed her in a subordinate position that was utterly foreign to her and that, much as she rebelled against it, she was forced to accept. The only person who was able at this time to give her any comfort was Courtin with his perfect manners and eternal good humour: and his despatches, when they escape for one moment from the purely political, are filled with stories of the ladies of the Court.

At the beginning of the year, just after Nell Gwynn's son had been raised to the peerage, Courtin paid a call on Madame de Mazarin: on whom Nell was calling to thank her for her congratulations on her son's recognition. Hardly had Courtin got over his first official greetings, when, he tells us, the Duchess was announced, "which did not happen very often." But, he continues, "everything passed off quite gaily and with many civilities from one to the other: but I do not suppose that in all England it would be possible to find two women more obnoxious to one another." Louise, however, departed first when Nell, "who was in a very sprightly humour," began to tease the Ambassador, remarking that he should suggest to Louis XIV that he send her a costly present, "telling me that she well deserved it and that she was of much more service to the King of England than was Mme de Portsmouth, and making me understand and all the company that he passed the night more often with her." And, after that, the other ladies who had heard much of the luxurious fineness of the actress's underclothing, begged permission to see it themselves. So, without more ado, Nell lifted her petticoats one by one

while everyone admired them and M. Courtin, forgetful of the fog and the troubles of politics, wrote in rapture : " I never in my life saw such thorough cleanliness, neatness and sumptuosity. I should speak of other things that we all were shown if M. de Lionne were still Foreign Secretary. But with you I must be grave and proper : and so, Monsieur, I end my letter."

But at the beginning of February, despite all the hatred and bitterness that had gone before and to the general astonishment of Court and Town a reconciliation took place between Portsmouth and Mazarin. Courtin was responsible. Bearing in mind the imminence of the meeting of Parliament he realized that the friendship of the ladies towards one another was imperative and that somehow a reconciliation must be made. Meeting Lady Hervey and Mrs. Middleton at the opera, he invited them both to dinner on the next day when each was to bring one of her friends. Lady Hervey brought Madame de Mazarin, and Mrs. Middleton arrived with Louise and Lady Beauclerk who, says Courtin, is " after Mme Myddleton the most beautiful woman in England and formerly an intimate friend of Lady Hervey : but now at Daggers drawn with her." The servants gasped. Courtin himself was terrified of what might be the outcome of this odd assortment. But he need not have worried. While the news filtered from the ambassadorial kitchens to the highways and by-ways of the city : while men stopped in the act of raising a mug to their lips to look at one another and wonder : while even the Ambassador predicted nothing but trouble, the enemies each showed they had a sense of humour. The table, shining with candles and silver, heard their mocking laughter. The Duchesses, who had hated each other as no women before had ever hated each other, watched

each other and caught each other watching and were aware of the absurdity of the situation and laughed again.

And Courtin, never a man to lose an opportunity, waited till dinner was over and then conducted each couple that was the most antagonistic to a different room where he locked them up: and, when he released the two Duchesses, he was delighted to see them "emerge hand in hand and come skipping and dancing down the stairs."

It was Hortense's triumph. Hitherto it had been the rest of the world that had given way to Louise--Catharine, Cleveland, Moll Davies, Nell Gwynn, one by one they had watched the French girl take their places, commanding all of Charles's attention, leaving them nothing but the mere shell and husk, the personal adornment and the wealth that was the symbol--but only the symbol--of the King's love.

But the advent, the accession and now the reign of the Mazarin were now no longer a matter of doubt: and for those who still, despite what must be so certain, doubted, Courtin wrote to Louvois: "She has a livery made more magnificent than any with which you are acquainted: the lace cost three livres, fifteen sols, the French ell and the coats are quite hidden by it. There are nine of them with which to array two porters, six lackeys and a page: and they cost, with the cravats, 2600 livres. She keeps an excellent table. In a word her expenditure far exceeds the 2000 crowns she has from her husband. . . . She has grown handsome: she is slimmer and her beauty has reached the highest point of its perfection. With the appetite which God has given her she would certainly devour double the income that she has: and if her husband were aware of how excellent is her health, he would make no difficulty about increasing her pension.

I do not know how she does it : but these extraordinary expenses appear to me a little suspicious."

There was no point in squabbling. Louise recognized that and she also recognized that Hortense would probably be her own worst enemy.

She could afford to laugh with Courtin now. She saw the wisdom in not letting the world think she was unhappy. A few days after the supper at the French Embassy, the Duchess of Portsmouth invited the Duchesse Mazarin and Lady Hervey to dine with her.

Court and Town gasped : but it gasped the more when, dinner over, Louise drove her two rivals down the Mall, past Nell Gwynn's house, in her own coach.

She had learnt one lesson from Charles . . . that the best weapon in the world is a cynical amusement.

CHAPTER IX

THE FRENCH GOLD AND THE FAITHFUL COMMONS

IN May of that year Courtin returned to Versailles. His scrupulousness brought about his undoing. An honest man himself, he was totally unable to hide his contempt for those whom his bribery bought: and, furthermore, he had complained unceasingly of the suffering to his health through the climate: and the suffering to his pocket through the expense of living at the Court of Whitehall. As to his health, he would, he declared, have died had not Charles urged him to wear flannel vests, "a plain sort of woollen stuff woven in the cottages of Wales. They could be washed as linen shirts and nothing could be more warm, comfortable and hygienic."

His complaints had been frequent: but the moment he heard that Jean Jacques Barillon was coming to succeed him, he suddenly remembered how much more pleasant was the company of the ladies at Whitehall than practising as a lawyer in Paris. In a letter to Pomponne he tried pathetically to point out how much in demand he was and how close to the heart of affairs: "Since I had the honour to write to you last, the Duchesse Mazarin has been to call on me, with the Duchess of Cleveland's eldest daughter, her most intimate friend, who is as fond as she is of amusing herself with dogs and white sparrows. The former lady begged me to offer you a thousand compliments in her name. The Duchess of Portsmouth has returned

from taking the waters in sounder health. Her skin is grown again so fair and fresh that I cannot imagine how King Charles, palled as he is with beauty, will be long in her company without becoming once more her slave. She has often with her Catharine Stuart, sister of the Duchess of Richmond, who married Lord Ibrichan, and is one of the most pleasant women here. Her husband sticks to her like a shadow and is ready to shoot or stab anyone who looks at her. He once tried to kill her in a fit of jealousy. I have never been in a country in which women are so prone to backbite each other as in England."

But, although he had never actually displeased Louis, Courtin at last came to see that he had not been strong enough and that the French King was determined that he must give way to Barillon. He made his adieux. Sadly he thought of the times when he had complained of the London fog. Sadly he walked in the park, chatting with York : or visited the house in Pall Mall and laughed with Nelly : or entertained, for the last time, at one of his marvellous suppers, the Duchesse Mazarin or the Duchess of Portsmouth.

He met Barillon. Furtively, half-afraid that the other might be criticizing him, he told him the affairs of the Court, introducing him to the ladies and taking him to Portsmouth's thrice-built palace, where he presented him and impressed on him that, if he wished to serve his sovereign, he must see her every day.

Barillon listened and nodded and took a pinch of snuff and was aloof and a little supercilious and a little contemptuous : and he and Louise and the Court watched Courtin go and later heard rumours of him and how he had ruined himself for his King and had spent his fortune, so that, next year, when his daughter married, she had no dowry, and the

only reward the old Ambassador ever got was the rather hollow one of dining twice a week with the King to the end of his life.

But Whitehall welcomed Barillon. They had liked Courtin. They had respected him. Unscrupulous as most of those round him had been, they had had a certain feeling for him, a certain honour that was always observed towards a man who was utterly honest. With Barillon, on the other hand, they felt more at ease, less ashamed of the parts they played, because, after all, he played the same parts. He was out to beat them at their own game. He was out to buy them as cheaply as he could and, having bought them, if possible to avoid payment.

He was utterly unscrupulous. One after another, pompous Colbert, austere Ruvigny and honest Courtin had taken their soundings: had got the measure of the Court: and, when they had finished, Barillon was sent over.

From the start, he realized the importance of Louise. Whereas in her eclipse Courtin had been inclined to think her importance was passed, Barillon saw at once that the Mazarin had been working Charles harder than he was able to endure and that, already tiring of him as a lover, she was casting her eyes round the Court for a possible successor. He sounded her. He saw that, dazzling as her physical attractions were, the mind behind them was the vain deceitful, happy-go-lucky mind of a child. In her, with her deep hatred for France, she could be no help--and, unlike Courtin, he believed she could be no hindrance.

From the start he did not make the mistake his predecessor had done of underrating Charles's intelligence. He saw him for what he was: brilliant, cynical, and not altogether heartless, and, above all things, determined to keep his throne. He saw, too, that the alliance with Louis was the

only sure way in which the King of England could keep his throne : because the King of England, in a land full of Englishmen, stood completely alone. . . .

He saw that as Courtin had seen it, as Ruvigny had seen it, as Louis and as every Frenchman had seen it—and he started off with the greatest faith in the world, on a completely wrong premise that was only possible through the misunderstanding of the English, their character, and their amazing facility for concealing their real feelings.

He told Louise. In those rooms of hers that had, of late, been so deserted, the two exiles from their own country met and planned and discussed and grew to understand each other while Charles was at Newmarket feasting the Prince of Orange, who had spent all his life as the bitter enemy of Louis XIV.

It was a bitter set-back for Barillon. It seemed almost as though Courtin had planned that he should have this to contend with for a start.

He and Louise whispered together. The Court was empty. Those who had not gone to Newmarket had departed to their own houses. For the time being the place was given over to cleaners and the sightseeing populace and Her Grace of Portsmouth and the excited Ambassador.

James was at Newmarket : and James had with him his daughter, Mary, whom William of Orange had come to marry. It was a silent courtship. The young Dutchman, absorbed in his struggle against the French, saw the marriage from no human standard : but only as a strengthening alliance against the French. The English people, hating the French, were wild with joy at the proposal. Bells were rung. Wine was drunk in the streets and, as the news reached the villages of Gloucestershire, Yorkshire and Scotland, bonfires were lighted at the match between an English Princess and the champion of European Protestantism.

James refused his consent : but Charles persuaded him and, for the time, as he never was later in life when he was King of the country, William of Orange became a Prince Charming, someone who had come to steal away the Fairy Princess, waking her by a kiss.

Opposition was useless. On November 1st Barillon wrote to Pomponne suggesting that he should congratulate Orange and that he should make a point of meeting him in the Queen's rooms or in those of the Duchess of Portsmouth. Louise agreed with all he said and, at all the festivities, she appeared, looking her most beautiful, clad in her gayest frocks and laughing as she had not laughed since the arrival of Mazarin.

Less than a month after the arrival of Orange the pair were married and Secretary Coventry wrote : "You will think we have been quicker than ordinary that a Prince should come and woo, marry, bed and carry away the Princess Mary in a month's time."

But the matter was one for haste. Charles had no children who could follow him on the throne and James's wife was already big with child which, with James in his present religious fanaticism, was likely as not to be baptized a Papist. The marriage with Orange was a great triumph for those who still shouted "No Popery," though, by November 16th, an old Essex puritan was writing in his diary : "Heard that the city was alarmed that the Papists plotted a massacre. Was the marriage a pillow to lull us asleep ?"

Surely some people would never be pleased !

But hardly had the bride and bridegroom sailed to Holland than Louise fell dangerously ill. Daily Charles, his past preference for Hortense forgotten, visited her and gave audiences to Barillon in her room.

For six weeks she was in bed, sometimes so ill that

the doctors despaired of her life and all the politicians at Versailles were agog with wonder at what might not befall if they lost this support at the Court of Whitehall. But if the politicians were alarmed there were others who were delighted and more. Mme Scudery related how, in the extremity of her illness, "Kéroualle preached to the King, crucifix in hand, to detach him from women." But, adds Mme Scudery, "three or four days after this, feeling better, she forced herself to rise and dragged herself into the Royal box at the Theatre where the King was sitting with Mme de Mazarin." They were the French Players who had arrived in London for a short time and Charles attended every one of their performances. When Louise arrived at the theatre Charles, according to Berthon, was sitting as close to Hortense as he possibly could: and the Breton girl had to push her way into the box.

It was a pathetic gesture this of the sick woman dragging herself from her bed that the rest of the world might see she was not quite cast off, and to proclaim that the rumours spreading round Town that Miss Fraser, the daughter of the King's chief physician, had taken her place were all false.

But, from this time on, the rivalry between the Duchess of Portsmouth and the Duchesse Mazarin became less bitter. Each seemed to have decided to allow the other to have some share in Charles's attentions, provided always that neither overstepped the bounds of the tacit agreement they had made. But, with the exception of Nell, whom they realized it would always be impossible to evict, they were determined that no other woman should enter the lists.

Nell did not matter. She was, after all, of a different standing from the others. She had never attempted to enter into political life or intrigues.

And, so long as she had her house in Pall Mall and her lace petticoats and her sedan chair, covered with leather and studded with brass-headed nails, she was happy. Charles might frequent her house, mixing, at her gay candle-lit supper parties, with men with whom he had nothing in common, striving with all the strength that lay in him to unite his subjects against a whole disunited world. He might do that : and he might, at Newmarket, sup and hawk and race and swear with the jockeys : and he might, at Windsor, be out early fishing or drilling that tiny regiment which was the pride and joy of his heart : or, middle-aged roué, go roystering through the town with Bowman and Buckingham and young Rochester : and pay extravagant compliments to his haughty nephew, William : or tease James because he was hard and unyielding as granite. He might do all these things : but they did not matter. Nothing mattered now, since Louise had been deep in the pit, so long as no new favourite swam into view : and the next descent to Avernus was made more perilous than ever.

She was a young woman : a beautiful woman, not yet thirty, rich and hated in this foreign country, where she had only Charles and Barillon to rely on ; but she had learnt wisdom. The cold English fogs that crept up from the river ; the filthy habits of Charles's lap-dogs ; the foul tongue and bullying ways of Pembroke ; the lovely voice of Bowman singing :

‘ The Glories of our Blood and State
Are shadows, not substantial things,’

the whispering of Danby and the lewdness of Chiffinch and the saintly face and saintly soul of Father Huddleston, all these she had come to learn were a part of England, a part of the Odyssey that when she left her dead Madame and sailed

to Dover, she took to herself, as one takes a mate in life, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, till death do them part.

But she was sick with nostalgia and a dim, unrealized longing for laughing French voices again and witty, cynical conversation and the fountains at Versailles and the screaming of the peacocks on the lawns in the place of the yapping of the lap-dogs. She was sick and homesick. She was French at heart and French to the heart as Nell was English and Hortense international, finding a home wherever there was a body that loved her body and eyes that sought hers and a soul that understood love as she understood it. And Louise was never like that. To Nell and Hortense the supreme fact of the whole of life lay in the act of love and to Louise that was only a part, a precious part, but not even an indispensable part. Because, there were other and more important things to her. There was loyalty : the loyalty to her Royal Master in Versailles and that strange inverted loyalty to her Royal lover in Whitehall. There was maternal tenderness to that son who was to disappoint her and mar his name and die from excesses years before she did. There was the aristocracy of her possessions : the fact that everything she owned must be of the best and that, unlike Nell, who was ever full of wonder and delight at what she obtained, to Louise these things came as part of her heritage : something that was hers by birth and breeding and was not—not even incidentally—acquired through her harlotry.

But she was strangely homesick : and while Charles was at Nell's, and Hortense was amusing herself with some other lover : and Danby, like some ashamed schoolboy, was begging favours of Louise, she suddenly made up her mind and told Charles and saw, for a moment, the look of relief on his face and cried for only a moment because,

after all, Charles did not matter, the thrice-built palace did not matter—nothing in the world mattered now, if she could go home : if she could see her parents again and the women in France who had scorned her years ago and who now adored her or were jealous of her—and who, at any rate, would do her honour.

She left. The cliffs of Dover sank behind her, the sea came up to meet her : beyond it was the peace and serenity of Versailles : and behind her Charles was collecting his army, sending despatches out to Flanders to plan a campaign against the French, while Parliament was called for January 15th.

Word came to Versailles, reaching the King before Louise reached him, throwing him into a tumult of worry and despair and uncertainty and having expresses despatched to Charles to offer more money, more honour, more anything provided the Parliament did not meet. For another fortnight the Houses were postponed. Charles suggested a treaty—Louis refused, and at the end of January the Faithful Commons, still growling like a pack of hounds at their King, came to Westminster. Charles faced them alone. He had burnt his boats. He had refused Louis' offer. He had nothing now to rely on save his own courage and the certainty that he could manage these curs.

Only Nell comforted him now. He was sick of Hortense. The desire he had known for her when she was unobtainable gave way to an odd weariness and staleness when, every time he saw her, she flaunted her charms in his face. He tried to escape from her. While the London mob was howling that their King had betrayed them to the French : while the Faithful Commons were saying that what his father had done the son would do also : while Barillon was sending Louise urgent letters, bidding her return at once, Charles sought new pleasures

with Hortense's friend, the Marquise de Courcelles. The two ladies had met in the convent where each, by an exasperated husband, had been confined. The Marquise had been married at fifteen : but, already, at that age, she had had Louvois as her lover : and, after her escape from the convent, she fell in love with the Marquis de Boulay, cousin of Chancellor Silléry. But Boulay was as jealous as her husband had been and the young lady wrote : " My poor Boulay, I am dreadfully afraid of losing patience. The pleasure of remaining innocent does not make up for the pain of being brow-beaten and insulted."

And later she wrote of herself : " I am tall and my eyes are anything but small. But I never open them completely, which gives them a soft and tender expression. I have a beautifully moulded bust, divine hands, fairly good arms—that is to say, arms that are rather thin : but I have a compensation for this misfortune in the pleasure I find in knowing that my legs are perfect and beat those of any other woman in Existence."

So, having grown weary of du Boulay, Sidonie de Courcelles arrived in England, " which," wrote Barillon to Pomponne, " is now the refuge of all the women who have quarrelled with their husbands." But Hortense had no wish to see yet another applicant for Charles's favours and she openly told de Courcelles that she did not believe she had come to England solely for the pleasure of seeing the Duchesse. Nor was there, she insisted, room for her at Whitehall, and, the Marquis conveniently dying at this time, she sent her back to France.

But meanwhile, with Louise in France and Charles being goaded by his Parliament that was in the pay of Louis, Lady Hervey and Mrs. Middleton were determined that Louise should

never be reinstated in her position. For eight years they had seen her star in the ascendant. For eight years there had never been a time when she was not in close attendance on Charles's person. But at last that time had come. Together they approached the Mazarin, urging her to do all that lay in her power to turn Charles against his mistress. On July 28th Barillon wrote to Pomponne that they had begged Hortense to conjure the King "to honour Mrs. Middleton's daughter with his attentions." But Louise was too sharp for them.

She had returned from Bourbon strengthened and refreshed. She was equal, she felt, to taking up the cudgels again on her own behalf: and Barillon was able to inform Versailles in his next despatch that, not only had Louise walked straight back into the centre of the King's attentions: but that she had prevailed upon him to deny to Madame Middleton and her daughter the entry to his cabinet.

The Brétonne had returned to her former position. The physical attractions of Nell and Hortense had not been able to shift her; and by the middle of the summer Barillon was jubilant as he wrote: "I cannot doubt that the King speaks to her of everything—and that she is able to do much to insinuate what she wishes. I believe also that Milord Treasurer—Danby—makes use of her to accomplish things which he does not like to propose himself. She takes great pains to let me see how jealous she is for the interests of the King." Even, he added, were the most famous courtiers on her side, and the Earl of Sunderland had declared himself her fast friend. But Sunderland's wife—the beautiful Countess who had assisted at the mock marriage at Euston so long ago and who had cut off the bride's and bridegroom's garters and had drawn the curtains on them as, laughing,

they entered into their room—was filled with a most diabolical hatred and jealousy, even going so far as to speak of her as “that abominable harlot and cheat.” For Louise’s allowance and the money she managed to extract from Charles in one way or another was far in excess of anything that the other mistresses obtained. Her regular income was £12,000 a year: but to this were added various grants and allowances that brought the total to £40,000: and, in 1681, the “Catholic Whore” was said to be paid by the Treasury £136,668. And, with all a Breton’s acumen, she laid out her money: employing a man named Taylor to invest it and give her receipts: and another, Timothy Hall, who sold Royal pardons for her to rich convicts.

No wonder the other women hated her: and there exists now at the Treasury a page of manuscript, written in two columns, of the sums paid to “Madame Carwell, now Dutchesse of Portsmouth” —and to “Nelly Gwynn.” From June 3rd to December 20th, 1676, the Duchess received £8773 and Nell only £2862, and in the following year Louise received £27,300 and Gwynn £5250.

But she did not hoard money. While Charles was scraping and struggling to collect supplies for the Army and Navy, Louise spent recklessly, living for spending and loving the things she was able to obtain and never counting the cost nor wondering whence the next payment would come. A statement has been found recently of a few things she purchased: but I do not think it sounds any more extravagant than the bill of Nell Gwynn’s that has already been quoted.

“Madame Carwell, now Dutchesse of Portsmouth,

“Dr. to W. Watts —:

“A coat of pigeon breast and silver brocade: breeches à la thingrave with canons, A coat faced

with white taffety and lined with camlet : breeches also faced at pockets and knees with taffeta : breeches having at the thigh slashed seams, to show red and silver lace, canons idem, idem with deep frill of point lace. A coat enriched with plain satin and watered ribbons and red and silver cord, with red, silver and point lace at the cuffs. A linen collar embroidered over with open needle-work : silk pockets of chamois leather for coat and breeches. Six dozen buttons of red and silver cloth : eight ells of taffeta for lining sleeves and breeches. A pair of silk stockings. A belt and embroidered pair of garters. A black beaver hat laced with red and silver."

But this man's costume—which is still preserved at the British Museum—must have been bought for a fancy dress ball : for Nell Gwynn had appeared on the stage in *Florimel* in male clothes and had been such a success that men's clothes became enormously popular among women and they did not even wait for the excuse of a fancy dress dance to put them on. In addition to such important ladies as Nell and Louise, there were below them a whole host of bawds, pimps, harlots and bastards who all figure largely in the Treasury Books. There was Mistress Chiffinch who shewed the ladies up the back stairs to the King's chamber and who, for that service, received £1200 a year. Catherine Crofts received £1500. Frances Stuart, whom some said Charles had loved and who had married the Duke of Richmond, was content with £150 a year. Bulkely, the pretty but vulgar, received £400 : and there were crowds of other concubines who were each paid £50 or £100 a year.

But these emoluments were paid entirely by Charles out of the money paid into the Treasury : while it was the money of the King of France that was paid each session to those pure-minded Members



T. Uwins del.

E. Scriven sc.

NELL GWYNN
From the Spencer Althorpe Collection.

of Parliament who were willing to sell their King and their country for a "handful of silver." Algernon Sidney, who has for so long figured as a great patriot, received £500 a session, Lord Berkshire was given £1000 and Coleman £360. And Barillon did his work properly. This bribing of King against Opposition and bribing of Opposition against King was a matter after his own heart. He kept account books. Each sixpence he paid was carefully docketed, while those men who returned the members to Parliament thanked God that they had honest men to represent them. In all, Barillon's account book shews that, in addition to what has already been noted, he paid out £108 6s. 8d. to persons of note who carried him information and another £1000 for secret reports from Army officers, Treasury clerks and Secretaries of State.

Sir John Baker, whom Pepys admired so much for his reticence and discretion, figured again and again in Barillon's note-book and was paid large sums to bribe Littleton and Poole so that they would enter into the service of France. And Barillon wrote, congratulating himself, that it would have been difficult to have found two men with a greater reputation for patriotism and honesty. . . . Finally Montague, the brother of Lady Hervey, hearing that money was about, demanded fifteen hundred guineas to bribe obscure country gentlemen whose votes might tell at a division.

And Charles, himself in the pay of Louis, now found his country receiving an equal subsidy: only in their case these men were receiving money to prevent Charles doing those things he had, for the honour of Englishmen, always done despite Louis and Louis' bribe.

When Parliament assembled, therefore, Charles

was faced by men who willingly voted "to raise £1,000,000 to enable His Majesty to enter into actual war with the French King." They so cut down the importations of French goods into the country that the revenue was depleted and Charles was no better off than before. In a moment Louis, seizing his opportunity, had struck, capturing Ghent and Ypres and surrounding Mons. Charles, to the baying of the Commons, sent three thousand men to Ostend : but, summoning Barillon, he told him he had no real wish for war and would do his best to avoid it.

In April Orange made a truce of three months with Louis : and, in the following month, Charles, having discussed with Barillon and Louise, came to terms again with the French King whereby for six million livres a year for three years he would do his best to keep the peace : and, should that fail, to dismiss the army and prorogue the Parliament.

It was a desperate venture. There was no one Charles could trust to draw up the document. Now, as always at a crisis, he was deserted by all, with Barillon and Louise urging him on and Danby, fearful for his own skin, refusing to put pen to paper. Alone in his closet, with only Chiffinch guarding the door against intruders, with the flickering candles and the snuffling of his lap-dogs and the scent which Louise used still upon him, the King of England wrote the document himself and sealed it and signed it : "This letter is written by me, C.R."

That done, he went to bed. But in the city strange and terrible rumours were afoot. The Parliament men, in their lodgings, talked of Noll Cromwell. Louise, having bought a new coach, dared hardly go out. The King slept. He was tired. The whole burden of his country lay upon him : the meadows of Windsor, the horses at Newmarket : the little ships lying at anchor round

the coast : the women whom he had loved : who, some of them, loved him. The King slept. In the city there were still men moving. In the coffee-houses the mischief makers sat all night talking : and men whispered of the treachery of Danby : and the perfidy of York : and the expense of Portsmouth—and the uncertainty of the succession. The murmur grew. Like some foul humour rising from a river the Commons found their strength returning to them, the strength that was only large enough to attack one man and was never large enough to beat him.

The King slept and woke and went down to Louise and swore he had finished with the others : with Hortense and Frances and Moll and far away, half-forgotten Lucy. But he must keep Nelly. He must have Nelly to laugh with, to be gay with, to cheer him after the solemnity of York, the duplicity of Barillon, the saintliness of Sancroft whom, last December, he had lifted from his Deanery and appointed Archbishop. And Louise was pacified, for Charles had returned to her as she had known he would.

He spent many days with her. He listened to her persuasions that he would join the Faith. James had done so—why should not he ? But she got no straighter answer from him than “ My father lost his head and my brother is like to lose his crown. Would you have me do one or the other ? ”

On April 29th he went down to the House and appealed for help in the Netherlands. But they would not hear him. The evil whispers had grown too strong. The foul humour had covered the land. York, Portsmouth, Barillon. . . . In a frenzy the Commons shrieked for No Popery. They demanded the abolition of the army which, they considered, a danger to the liberty of the subject : and, through Harry Savile, demanded the dismissal

of Lauderdale. Charles lost his temper and became speechless with rage. Two days later the Commons presented him with an address to dismiss Lauderdale. Charles paid no heed and prorogued the House till the end of May.

He was checkmated. In Scotland the Covenanters were threatening war. In England the Opposition was ready to take up arms : and Charles, bankrupt, had his own little army in Flanders. He saw Barillon and learned that Louis had bribed the Commons. Yet, bitterly as he must have felt it, with that incomparable ability of his for laughing at his own troubles, he was able to joke with Louise so that Barillon thought he could not have understood rightly. But Charles *had* understood. And, within a week, he was urging William of Orange to disband his army and make the best peace he could with Louis—while he, Charles, was again applying to Barillon for money. He did not want to do it. For as long as he could he had held out against it : but now, forced by his Parliament, he must have recourse again to the French money-bags.

When Parliament reassembled, Charles, casting all pride from him, made one last appeal. Danby followed him : but both Houses were deaf, and when news came that peace had been declared on the Continent they screamed for the immediate dismissal of the army.

Barillon rushed the news to Louis, who immediately set his army in motion again and refused the original terms he had been willing to grant Charles.

Charles rushed down to the Lords. He was deaf to the appeals of Barillon and Louise and, in one splendid gesture, by demanding that the army should be held together, he threw away all hope of help from Versailles.

On Hounslow Heath the puppet army was gathered while dark-eyed, weary almost beyond

endurance, hated and distrusted by the people who would not understand him and whom he had tried so hard to serve, Charles watched it at its manœuvres.

But there were others who saw in those new regiments a deep menace. Those who had shouted so violently for "No Popery" and a Protestant Succession saw in the small troop gathered outside London only the outward sign of the King's coming imposition of Catholicism.

Shaftesbury, who had courted King and Parliament, in whom the Puritans saw a man of light and real faith, and Charles saw the "most vicious dog in England," was eager to see Danby's head fall and the King of England humiliated.

The whispers in the coffee shops grew louder. Men walked about armed. Women dared not appear out of doors unless accompanied by a male escort. When York walked abroad he was abused and shouted at. As Portsmouth drove her carriage through the streets she was pelted with stones and dung.

But it was the thunder before the storm. For a little, when the people were accustomed to the sight of the soldiers they forgot their fear and horror and rallied round the King. A sudden wave of patriotism swept the land. In July the Commons voted the King money. On the 31st of the month Louis gave way and peace was signed at Nymegen.

Tired and weary and a little bewildered the Parliament men took themselves home: and Charles, travelling in the same carriage as Louise through the hot country-side, went down to Windsor to rest and hunt and make love that had grown a little tired and very tender—and to hear the repercussions of the fury of the French King in Versailles.

CHAPTER X

THE POPISH PLOT

LOUIS was infuriated. That dupe, Charles Stuart, had ruined his plans and shewn himself to be not such a dupe after all. All through that August a frantic correspondence passed between Louis and Barillon. Louise at Windsor was unaware of the height of the storm that was to rage about her ears : only Shaftesbury, persisting that his only desire was “to lye at his feet and make publicly in the House of Lords any acknowledgement and submission that His Majesty demanded,” and Buckingham, off on a mysterious visit to Versailles, knew that Barillon had received his instructions to do “everything possible to make things difficult for the King of England.” Throughout the land, under that torrid August sun, there was anxiety. Ormonde wished for nothing but peace while wild fanatics travelled “up and down the country like martial evangelists with sword and pistol as if they came, not to prate down, but storm our religion.”

The not wholly disbanded army : the marriage of William and Mary—“a pillow to lull us asleep”—the foolish chatter of York and Portsmouth’s open declaration of her faith—with the poor Queen attending her Mass with her unwashed, illiterate Portuguese priests, all these became sure portents that the Anglican Church, for which men’s fathers had striven so hard, was about to be overthrown through French agency. At Windsor they hawked

and hunted and, in the long rooms, under the light of candles, danced as the Court had ever danced, whether the omens proclaimed the Dutch in the Medway, the conquering arms of Louis or the overthrow of all true religion and undefiled. Only Charles and Louise, pausing in their dances, seemed for a moment aware of the threatening clouds, the unhappy disappearance of Buckingham and the duplicity of Shaftesbury.

And, while the Court danced, in London, at street corners, in the dimly lit coffee shops, the agents of pure religion went about their foul work, spreading fear in men's hearts and an overwhelming, irrational, reckless hatred. Israel Tonge, a fanatical clergyman, and Titus Oates, a man so hideous as to cause fear to children, had warned Charles on the day before he departed for Windsor of a Catholic Plot. Charles, his ears still ringing with the "No Popery" shouts of the Parliament men, told them to tell their tales to the Marines or to Danby.

The two scoundrels hastened away and, with a frenzy of zeal, set to making discoveries in the Government offices of the threatened plot. The King, they announced, was to be assassinated and York put on the throne. The Catholic Religion was to be established. No one might sleep in safety, and the ancient lands that had been given out to the squirearchy were to be returned to their monastic owners. Immediately the terror rushed through the land. Those who had come into possession of the monastic lands feared for their money-bags. Those who had neither money nor land feared mightily that their consciences, which they had saved by their adherence to true religion, might be lost: and their bodies, which they had fed lustily through the non-interference of true religion, might be burned. An Inquisition would be set

up. Cardinals would reign in the land. And all for which Englishmen had striven would be cast away.

On September 28th the Council, mocked by Charles, terrified in itself, sent for Tonge and Oates and examined them learnedly. A bundle of papers was produced and Oates, his ridiculous face inspired by the rightness of his mission, expatiated at length on a Jesuit Plot. It was a magnificent plot that he unfolded. And, from the number of people implicated, the wonder of it was that it had, through the mercy of God, been left to this unfrocked Jesuit priest to divulge it. But Oates, wagging his head, foaming at the mouth with his vehemence, had an answer—for, said he, he had only joined the Jesuits to be enabled to worm out their secrets: which done, he, as a patriotic Englishman, must needs lay his discoveries before his King and Council.

And the Council, if not the King, was ready to hear him and believe. The Pope, Louis, the King of Spain, the Generals of the Jesuits and the Archbishops of Catholic cathedrals all were in it—and, Oates declared, the King was to be poisoned, Catholicism was to be burnt into the land: while an army of three thousand soldiers from France and Italy waited the word to set sail into England.

All Saturday the Council sat. At midnight, too frightened to yawn, each member attended by extra guards (and how, they wondered, could they be sure that even the men in their own employ were not also in the employ of the Catholic plotters?) set out for their homes. But they were back at eight in the morning, listening to a new set of lies that Oates had concocted and feeling their hearts turn to stone with fear in them. Not quite all believed, for, wrote Coventry, the Secretary: "If he be a liar, he is the greatest and adroitest I ever

saw, and yet it is a stupendous thing to think that vast concerns are like to depend on the evidence of one young man who hath twice changed his religion."

Only Charles kept his head. Thinking of his Queen and his stubborn headed brother, and of Louise and of old Huddlestone, he laughed at Oates, examining him again and again, proving him a liar in one point after another and, finally, laughing him to scorn, departed out of the Chamber : out of Whitehall to Newmarket. Louise went with him. Now it seemed as though all the heart-break and jealousy over Hortense had never been and as though Charles could not see enough of the Breton : and the Queen made merry with her and laughed and old York paid her solemn, ill-fitting compliments that she could not believe when she looked at his mistresses and saw what he liked. And Huddlestone, who had ministered to Charles so long ago at Whiteladies, told her not to fear for, though men raved and demanded the blood of Catholics, God looked after His little ones. And, he asked, were not five sparrows sold for a farthing—and yet——

She listened to Huddlestone. Despite what the Frenchwomen said, she was deeply religious and, in her heart, she knew there was only one faith—the Catholic Faith that Charles, to her grief, though she knew him a Catholic, would not declare, and that the Court ladies at Versailles never understood and only men like Huddlestone fully pondered and lived in.

And, behind them, as she and Charles watched the racing at Newmarket, for the King was getting old now and his bones were too set for racing and his body was a little bit tired, behind them the Council sat and the whisperings came out of the Council chamber and into the city and down the

streets into the coffee shops where the Protestant men crouched, clutching their swords and their money-bags.

On October 7th Oates appeared in the Council chamber, announcing that Danby had discovered a secret correspondence between Coleman, York's servant, and Louis' Confessor. The Council buzzed. Men feared more greatly. And Oates proceeded to lay charges before the magistrate, Sir Edmund Godfrey. Two days later Godfrey disappeared and all loyal hearts—even those that had previously doubted Oates—feared exceedingly. On the seventh day his body was found lying in a ditch on Primrose Hill, pierced by his own sword, after having been strangled.

It was the proof that men needed. After God—the Protestant God—Oates was the greatest force in the kingdom. . . . Oates had saved them. Oates had warned the country. The country could not and must not do without him. Charles, more doubtful than ever, returned from Newmarket. Louise, fearing for herself and for Huddleston, followed : to a London given over to terror, where Pepys suspected that, in his neighbour's cellar, was gunpowder, and Shaftesbury set his wife to carry a loaded pistol in her muff, and even young Rochester, drunkenly embracing some Drury Lane harlot, felt his heart faint whenever he thought of what might befall.

The mob seized Godfrey's body and marched through the city, waving swords and sticks and stopping outside Portsmouth's house, screaming curses and hatred. And the Council and magistrates, the blood lust aroused, issued warrant on warrant, while only Charles remained sceptical and Oates was lodged in Whitehall at £1200 a year and the mob yelled for victims.

They got them. Coleman, York's servant, went

first and his only epitaph was a message of Barillon to Louis, "Coleman has sent me word to be in no wise uneasy, because nobody can find in his papers a scrap of writing to testify to his transactions with me." Oates testified against Coleman, swearing that he had learned at St. Omer that Coleman had incited the Jesuits there to murder the King in return for the payment of thirty thousand Masses. Also, he swore that the prisoner had promised the Irish £200,000 to rise in rebellion. Coleman protested. He screamed his innocence. He almost let the cat out of the bag that he had received £200 from Barillon.

Oates's evidence had been taken in private. The judge congratulated the informer on his courage in coming forward. There was just one thing. . . . He *had* seen Coleman, he said. Would he be so good as to identify him?

Oates consented: but, faced with half a dozen men, he picked out two wrong ones and then complained of the light.

But the jury did not mind. They wanted blood. Candle-light was proverbially bad. Besides, Mr. Oates testified that, standing on his legs, his memory was not so good as when sitting down. They would accept his testimony and thank him for all he had done, the courage he had shewn. . . . And the Lord Chief Justice summed up. Coleman, it appeared, was the actual instigator of the plot to put James on the throne.

In that case, of course, he must have planned the murder of Charles. Therefore he must be guilty. The jury, without being asked, concurred. The mob outside the court yelled with Protestant zeal. The judge, commenting on the leniency with which he was treating the case, ordered Coleman to be disembowelled and his intestines burned before his eyes.

Oates next turned his eyes on the Court ladies. The Duchesse Mazarin was denounced in loud terms as a Catholic accomplice. But no one took much notice. Perhaps the people realized as well as Charles did that Hortense's activities were solely concerned with the bedchamber and that she had no particular axe to grind politically.

But the attack on Hortense alarmed Louise. Not daring to show herself by day for fear of the mud and stones that would be flung at her, she proceeded at night to Barillon's residence and, with tears in her eyes, told him of her fear for her own safety. Barillon was impressed. If the Duchess of Portsmouth was attacked, who, then, could be saved? And Louise's Catholic Confessor was an obvious target. She reminded Barillon of the example of Alice Ferrers who, in the reign of Edward III, was obliged to appear before Parliament and undertake never to see the King again.

But the fury and the frenzy of the mob continued.

At last Louise, seeing all men against her, felt as though she must give in, and at the beginning of December, Barillon wrote: "Mme de Portsmouth has spoken to me as though she were not sure of remaining here. There are many persons who are anxious to name her in the Parliament. She affected to tell me that she did not regard the prospect of her retirement to France as a great misfortune: that Your Majesty had caused her to be given by Milord Sunderland assurances of his benevolence and protection: that she would not desire that her presence would injure or cause embarrassment to the King and that she should prefer to withdraw while she possessed some share in his good graces, as she might perhaps be attacked at a time when the King would not have for her all the consideration he has at present."

But the angry host had not yet finished. They might attack Louise and Hortense, Coleman could be disembowelled, hundreds of others could be mutilated and imprisoned : but the mob picked at higher game. At the end of October Oates appeared in the Council and announced that the Queen was party to a plot to assassinate Charles. The Council rose as one man, demanding that Charles put her away and seek another wife. Catherine, misunderstood, unhappy, clung to Portsmouth : and Charles, roused beyond his usual good-humoured laughter, lost his temper. "They think I have a mind to a new wife," he said, "but, for all that, I will not see an innocent woman abused."

For the moment Charles was beset by those urging him to a divorce. Burnet, sent by Buckingham, pleaded with him : but Charles was adamant. Through all his changes and mistresses, he said, she had stuck to him—was it likely that now he would desert her ?

His courage was her salvation and, for the moment, the wildness of the mob was stayed. The Lords refused to pass a bill for Catherine's removal: and, at Oxford, when an over-zealous chaplain omitted the Queen's name from the prayers, the fellows set upon him after service and ducked him.

But the storm continued. York fled from the country and was in earnest correspondence with Orange ; and Charles, for fear of the people, was obliged to send his French musicians back to their own country. And all over England men were receiving rewards for lodging information and tracking down priests. Millicent Hanson received "£10 for seeking out priests" and one Massel had £20 for arresting a priest.

They were sad times for Catholics. The most noble member of the House of Lords—Stafford—was one of the victims—and Charles Clare, his

accuser, received "for finding witnesses and bringing them into Court £100."

The Terror reigned and, in all that unholy time, only Charles Stuart kept his head. He was bankrupt again and this time there seemed so little hope of receiving money that, in the New Year, he was compelled to send for Barillon and inform him that, owing to the expense, he would be unable to maintain his ambassadors at the foreign Courts. In desperation Barillon wrote to Louis : but that wily monarch, having got Charles Stuart where he wanted him, took no notice. London was filled with terrified and discontented people. Portsmouth, the mob cried, had persuaded Charles to prorogue Parliament, fearful that, should it sit any longer, her own part in the plot would be discovered. The mob waited outside her residence, seething with fury, maintaining that she had planned the murder of Godfrey and spat on his body.

Like Charles, she turned to Barillon : but he was as powerless as herself in face of the inflamed sore of public terror.

Shaftesbury was the only straw to cling to and desperately Louise sent for him. He arrived, condescending, polite, but filled with his own overweening ambition. They talked and what they said will never be known : only that immediately afterwards Charles dissolved Parliament and the country prepared for the first General Election of the reign.

The plot was the basis of electioneering. Those who believed most fervently in it and who screamed their beliefs the loudest swept the polls and Parliament returned with an overwhelming Presbyterian majority. Shaftesbury had conquered and Danby's valiant men were swept out of sight. Danby himself was clapped into prison and Buckingham, witty Buckingham, was discredited on all sides. He crept

away. His creditors swooped down on him as a flock of carrion crows and, harassed so that he could no longer hold up his head, he died.

Tonge and Oates, appearing before the Commons, revealed doubtful proofs of Danby's complicity in the plot and his determination that it should not be revealed. Charles swore valiantly to save him, going down to the House and telling the excited members that, though they found Danby guilty ten times, he would ten times pardon him. The Devil was let loose, and on April 14th the Lords agreed with the Commons for an Act of Attainder. As Danby was rowed down the river to the Tower the London mob collected on the banks of the river, vilifying him and waving halters. It seemed that the last stable person had gone and Shaftesbury and Sunderland were left in full power. But the rise had been too sudden for Shaftesbury. Seeing himself now as another Noll Cromwell he set to remove the real chief of his party—William of Orange : for William was no docile man such as Shaftesbury needed : and, in his place, he set up the Duke of Monmouth. It was a poor choice. Petted and spoiled since a child and early taking his part in all licentiousness, the only thing Monmouth had to recommend him was his looks. The chiefs of the party who had chosen him had overstepped the mark. Charles would stand a good deal : but never this interference with the succession.

Charles came down to Louise. All over the city bonfires blazed in Monmouth's honour : fireworks were exploded : and men saw signs in the heavens. Together, the French spy and the English monarch discussed the situation. It appeared hopeless. After eighteen years of striving to raise his kingdom from the pay of the French, Charles was thrown back where he had been at the beginning : bankrupt and lonely and this time without even the

loyalty of his people behind him. He must have money and, as he told Louise, there was but one place from which he could obtain it. He stayed with her some hours, with only Chiffinch aware of where he was. That afternoon Louise sent for Barillon to see him privately. At midnight the Ambassador, on foot, crept to Louise's apartments, to find the King awaiting him, alone, pacing up and down, his face worn and old.

He began without apology or preliminary. As things were proceeding, he said, England was well on the way to becoming a republic. Would that suit Louis? Did he want a republic or did he want a monarchy? He could have whichever he wished—for the future of England lay entirely in his, Louis', hands: and he, Charles, for his part, wanted nothing more than for the two countries to be indissolubly bound together for the rest of his reign.

But Barillon also had his instructions and, none too gently, he reproached Charles for the marriage of William and Mary, and the fact that, despite Louis' heavy financial commitments, he had hitherto never been able to rely on the English neutrality. What safeguard had Louis that any other money he put out would prove a sound investment? Charles argued. He pointed out his difficulties and Louise added her persuasions: but Barillon was adamant. For the time being, with the country in the state it now was, and with Charles's word as unreliable as it had proved in the past, it mattered not to Louis whether England was royalist or republican.

Charles argued again. James and Danby, he said, had brought pressure to bear on him, for each wanted to court popularity by crying out against France. In secret he had opposed them as much as he dared. He had, he admitted, made a glaring

blunder in not realizing to what commitments the Dutch marriage would lead. He saw his mistakes now and he saw with grief the blood of the Catholics that was being shed. But, he asked, striding up and down the room, what could he have done in the face of such national fury and without help from Louis?

Barillon left. Charles and Louise sat late into the night, while the candles guttered and the summer dawn came and the only end to it all seemed their own flight.

And meanwhile Monmouth, swelled with his own conceit, the too willing tool of Shaftesbury and Sunderland, claimed, through his mother, Lucy Walters, descent from Edward IV and the rights of the ancient house of Plantagenet. Barillon was excited. He saw Charles again and Louise, listened to their wild laughter at this fantastic claim and wrote in haste to his master, telling him that, fantastic as it might appear, it was just one of those things that the English loved and that never seemed odd to them.

But Louis was not impressed. He wrote to Barillon, telling him that so long as Parliament remained unassembled, Monmouth could prove no rights—and that, for just as long as Parliament did not meet, he would keep Charles supplied—but on no other conditions at all. And once more Barillon came to Louise's apartments—for it was too dangerous for him to see the King elsewhere—delivered his message and received Charles's assurance that he had decided to do as Louis bade and not to allow Parliament to assemble until the King of France judged that it would be of no moment or inconvenience to himself. Then Charles held out his hands and waited for money. Surely the matter was clear now? They had been through enough. The whole land had suffered. God knew if Parlia-

ment assembled again it would mean a new batch of victims—other loyal servants, like Danby, falling : more attacks on Louise and the poor frightened Queen.

But Barillon knew that he held the whip hand. How, he demanded, did Charles suppose that Louis could pour out limitless supplies when, half the time, Charles was leaving him in the lurch ? Up to this time, Louis had supplied Charles through brotherly friendliness, receiving little or nothing in return. But now the French coffers were half-empty. Money could not be spent unless for serious reasons. However, as he did not wish to see Charles distressed for lack of money, he was willing to advance £20,000 if Parliament was not convoked till the end of March.

Charles was furious. Barillon wrote to Louis that Charles shewed "great surprise at the offer of so mediocre a sum, and spoke with much heat concerning the extremity to which he was reduced of placing himself in entire dependence on Your Majesty or allowing a free rein to the violence of the lower Chamber, and conforming in everything to its caprices." And then he sought Louise again, bidding her see that Charles did nothing without her knowledge and, if possible, without her advice.

But he did not know Charles as Louise knew him and the utter impossibility of ever settling that brilliant mind to one set of plans and making him keep to them. Louise smiled and promised she would do her best and was gratified when, before she broached the subject to Charles, he came to her, begging her to advise him and telling her that he had never cared for any other, lest it be Nell, but her. Through Sunderland, Louise directed the Government, flattering him, telling him that were it not for him the country must have crashed long ago—and being bitterly and savagely angry when



Jean de la Haye peint

LOUIS XIV

she heard that Sunderland reported all the conferences that Charles and Barillon had together to his wife, who saw to it that they were noised abroad : and who proclaimed her hate for " that designing jade."

In a fury Charles, roused as ever where one of his women was concerned, saw Lady Sunderland and scolded her roundly, only to be told that all she had said she had said because she was fearful of her husband's name being associated with the French policy. But Charles was not appeased. . . . Louise was the only person who had stood by him in his trouble, and he was further infuriated at this time when Jarret and Duncombe, two of the younger courtiers, got Louise's black page and, making him drunk, spread abroad all the tittle-tattle they were able to get out of him. Two days later, Parliament having met again, Portsmouth's name was mentioned in debate : but, to the fury of Algernon Sidney, she was not attacked with that whole hearted vigour he could have wished.

But Louise's position was desperate. In the whole of the country there was only one person on whom she could rely—and he, in his turn, had only herself to rely on. The mention in Parliament (though it had turned to nothing)—the tales of Lady Sunderland, the gossip about Blackamoor, all these things had combined to shew her that the hatred to which she had grown accustomed and largely indifferent had become now a matter of greater urgency : since it was the spear-head of an attack that would not be stopped until she was out of the country. And she could not afford to leave the country. Her coffers were more empty now than they had ever before been. Charles was penniless. To return to Versailles would shew that she had failed and that there could never be another mission on which she would be sent.

With slow calculation she looked about her. She must find a champion, someone the people loved and who was of Royal rank. And in all the country there was only the Protestant Monmouth—the popinjay—the enemy of her religion, for whom in herself she could feel nothing but contempt when she saw how he had developed all the bad points of his father, without his father’s wit or industry or brilliance. But Monmouth was flattered, and one Mistress Wall, a servant of Louise’s, helped matters considerably by publishing vigorously Louise’s fondness for Monmouth and her promises that she would advance him in every way she could. For the moment Louise was safe. . . . She might be a Catholic. She might have been or still be in the pay of France, but she had promised to help the Protestant men. No longer did men storm outside her windows nor was her carriage pelted with mud when she drove abroad. And Charles, to shew his contempt for Monmouth, but his gratitude to Mistress Wall for assisting her mistress, made her Keeper of the Queen’s Body Linen and promised her Mistress Chiffinch’s place whenever that lady might die or retire.

But the hounds of No Popery were not well pleased. Almost as soon as Louise had been received by Monmouth, a mysterious packet was produced, supposedly containing a secret correspondence between herself and Barillon—in the course of which Louise was made to write: “All these English hate me: but that does not trouble me, since the King tells me everything and my friends alone have influence.” The mob was aflame again. The French whore had betrayed them. She had betrayed Charles. She would now betray Monmouth. They whispered in the coffee shops. The two courtiers who had made the page drunk produced more revelations: and, in the midst of

this turmoil, Barillon and Charles and Louise still negotiated : as a result of which Barillon wrote to Louis : " I saw yesterday Madame de Portsmouth from whom the King of England keeps nothing hidden. She came to tell me that if Your Majesty would give him four million of livres a year for three years, he would enter into any engagement Your Majesty might propose. But without this sum he could not avoid assembling Parliament. The King himself told me later in the day that he was mortified to being reduced to drive a bargain with Your Majesty."

But Louis would not agree, considering that Charles was demanding too much : and, instead, with all his old duplicity, he decided that it would be safer and cheaper to continue to foment the quarrel between Charles and the Opposition by subsidizing that Opposition.

In the summer Charles had an attack of ague which brought him very low so that at one time the doctors despaired of his life—and it was only ultimately saved by the new medicine known as the Jesuits' Bark.

But, as summer changed to autumn, Louise saw that her championship of Monmouth, while assisting him greatly, was being of no assistance to her. Accordingly, then, she joined with York in getting him sent from London : and it was only Louis himself who prevailed on Charles to allow him to remain in the kingdom, lest his exile should rouse popular fervour in his behalf : and, while keeping Monmouth in the country, Barillon was paying out money to the Opposition : to Algernon Sidney five hundred guineas : to the Presbyterian leader, Baker, five hundred guineas : to Littleton and Powels five hundred guineas ; to Herbert five hundred guineas ; and " to maintain Bulstrode in his employment at Brussels four hundred guineas."

But nevertheless Parliament remained unmanageable. Monmouth returned to London in triumph. Bonfires were lit and men made merry, "talking as though Christ had been born again," and, wrote Barillon, "every night he sups with Nelly, the courtesan, who has born the King two children and whom he visits," for Nell Gwynn had set herself up as the Head of the Protestant women : though that did not prevent her later from making a most eloquent conversion to Rome.

At the very end of the year Parliament, sure of what it wanted at last, demanded the removal from Court of Sunderland and the Duchess of Portsmouth, whom, they proposed, should be executed along with Danby and the Catholics in the Tower.

Louise was terrified. In a pathetic attempt to save herself, she dismissed her Catholic servants, weeping as she did so—and prepared to flee to France.

But Charles did not desert her. When news came to him of the intended impeachment and execution, he strode down to the House, his face white, and working with fury, and, without more ado, prorogued the Parliament, remarking that he had freed himself from a great burden, "but I will submit to anything rather than endure the House of Commons any longer."

And, in her apartments, Louise waited, still weeping, still in the turmoil of a servantless house : but utterly happy that, in this extremity, Charles had not failed her.

CHAPTER XI

THE EXCLUSION BILL

SOME of them were growing old. For nearly nineteen years Charles Stuart had managed, through the tempestuous seas, to steer his frail bark. He had been deserted. He had been betrayed. He had seen the integrity and the honesty of men give way to distrust and suspicion and dishonour. He had seen the beauty of women fade and wither and be forgotten or only remembered as something infinitely sad and precious and holy-lovely. Out of the past there peered up at him, laughing at him, mocking, weeping sometimes, bidding him be of good cheer—Lucy—that bold, stupid lass who had mothered Monmouth. They said she had been driven out of the Hague now, as an infamous woman and a harlot. Cleveland, with her savage tongue and imperial beauty, who was hiding in France. Peg Hughes, who had been only as a falling star and whose destiny he, Charles, had never known. Frances Stuart, whom he had married to Richmond: and Hortense, who had now taken another lover and had little to do with him. There had been so many of them, all lovely, all of whom he had loved, all of whom had meant something to him in those troubled years since he had escaped from Whiteladies with Jane Lane riding behind him. And only Nell and Louise had been faithful.

But he was getting old. No longer now could he rise at four and hunt all the morning and conduct State business all the afternoon and dance to cock-

crow again. He was scant of breath. There was a pain that attacked him in his side and there were times when he lost his temper, a thing he had sworn not to do. He was getting old and a little tired and a little impatient with those people who, at the sacrifice of his own honour and integrity, he had saved again and again.

For they would never leave him alone. They would never leave alone those for whom he cared—the Queen and Louise and stupid old James. And Danby they had thrown in the Tower. And young Monmouth, who was handsome and had as many brains as a sackful of feathers, was stirring up trouble : and Sunderland and Shaftesbury were overstepping themselves and Buckingham had left him : and young Rochester, who had been such a fool, but such a dear fool, Rochester had gone away home to his wife whom he had neglected and, men said, was making his peace with God as he lay dying.

Rochester—that thing of life and movement and vast impropriety—dying. It was the end of a period. The Reign might go on. He, Charles, might continue to live a few more years—twenty or thirty—but it would not be the same. The Parliament men had got the whip hand now as they had had it over his father : as, most certainly, they would have it over James. And whispers reached one that men said now that the Restoration had been an Act of drunken folly and that there must be a return to Cromwell's Major-Generals and the secret assembly of the Kirk. Well, Rochester had been right as he had sung in Nell's garden :

“ Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down.”

He had been right, it seemed : because the English did not know what they wanted, and once they had

a Protector again they would demand another king. He fell to musing sometimes. He had still a part of his work to do. He had tried his hardest at most things : but now he had to make the succession secure, to see that sober idiot James did receive his crown even if, as Charles strongly suspected, he should prove incapable of holding it.

For the time being, however, there was a certain amount of peace. Parliament, dissolved to the four corners of the realm, was unable to continue its wild chase after victims. It was true, of course, that victims were still sought and found, just as it was true that Titus Oates was lodged now in Whitehall, but the real fury of the storm had abated a little, and though Shaftesbury—"that damned villain"—talked in the coffee shops and attempted to raise an armed body to march to the Palace, nothing much came of it : and Shaftesbury was thrown back on the old cry against Louise and the Duke of York. But popular feeling had veered round a little. Fostered by Charles, men had begun to realize that not every Papist was the possessor of gunpowder or deadly drugs or even the desire to use these things for their purpose. In the last July Waterman, the Queen's physician who, in company with the Queen herself, had been accused of attempting to assassinate Charles, had, by an overwhelming majority, been acquitted, despite the wild clamour of Oates. And, if Waterman was not guilty, surely then, common sense argued, there must have been others : poor priests and poor men and women whose sole desire was to practise their religion unmolested and let others do the same. Might not, it was suggested, might not Oates have been helping himself and feathering his own nest out of the accusations and had he not, once or twice, been caught out in fantastic lies ?

Men wondered. A curiously belated sense of

English fair play descended on many as they listened again to Oates's battalions demanding that Monmouth, "that foolish bastard," take the place of the rightful heir. Was Monmouth likely to be more stable than James? What guarantee had they that he, in the pride of his power, might not, once ascended, indulge in far more serious abuses than James would contemplate? And James too, as Lord High Admiral, had managed naval affairs with despatch and brilliance and earned the love of his men. Why not James then?

Charles, with that strange ability of his for always making the move at the right time, sent for James and re-established him at Court and, when three or four Whig Lords, in consternation at York's return, asked permission to retire from the Council, Charles gave it "with all my heart." At the same time, aware that men were now ready for such a pronouncement he caused to be published a proclamation in which he declared that Monmouth was illegitimate as he had never been married to anyone but the Queen.

Meanwhile James, not unaware that in these troubled times the only person of importance beside the King who could be relied on to keep her head was Louise, entered into close relations with her, visiting her often at her apartments, despite his wife's protests and at the same time, with clumsy duplicity, offering the Protestants that, once he was ascended, he would cause her to be sent out of the land. The news of this offer reached Louise as it was bound to: but, unlike others of the ladies, she took no outward notice, binding Sunderland to her by whispering to him certain of the less important secrets between herself, Charles, Louis and Barillon; though Lady Sunderland was so incensed by this that she wrote: "So damned a jade as this would sell us without hesitation for five hundred guineas."

At the same time she visited Shaftesbury, telling him of the danger of Louise, so that on June 26th, 1680, Shaftesbury, "clad all in blue, looking very fine, tho' a little shaky to my mind," appeared before the Grand Jury at Westminster Hall and denounced Louise as "a common nuisance" and James as "a Popish recusant." Charles, angered beyond measure, sent private word to the judges that, if they listened to the accusations, he would not answer for the consequences, and had the pleasure of seeing the jury discharged before the case was reached. Monmouth, thereupon, set out on a semi-Royal progress through the south and south-western counties, at which Charles was so angry that he refused him the right to come to Court on his return.

It seemed, however, to Louise that her name, for her own safety and convenience, was being mentioned too frequently in conjunction with James. Accordingly, then, having discussed the matter with Sunderland, she entered into a friendship with Godolphin who, it was whispered, was well in the Prince of Orange's graces. But it was a hard game she and Sunderland had set themselves to play—keeping Orange alive to the dubiousness of his position: watching York lest he play them false, placating Shaftesbury and taking good care not to offend Monmouth's vanity.

For a little they continued, declaring for no one, yet holding out hope to all that they would be on their side. But on October 21st Parliament again assembled, the Opposition comfortable in the possession of the French gold in their pockets, for Louis, furious at Orange's successes, had decided to support Monmouth entirely and had given Barillon instructions to "separate the Parliament and Court, stir up strife, sow division," for he realized that, with the minds of Charles and the

Parliament concerned with the succession, he might be allowed to continue his policy in Europe without English interference.

Charles himself, at the opening of Parliament, was seen to be in an irritable and irrational mood : which Mr. Noel Williams thinks may be attributed to the fact that Louise had recently openly declared herself to be on Orange's side and had also declared, in common with Shaftesbury and his gang, for the exclusion of York. Moreover Barillon, worried almost beyond endurance by his budgeting for bribes, was horrified to hear Louise declare in public that she preferred English interests to French ones and that she had every intention of keeping up friendly relations with Orange, Louis' chief enemy. Barillon sent her a note, expostulating with her, and was a little comforted when, late at night, Louise came to him privately, assuring him that Charles's intentions were as they always had been and that, above all things, he wished to preserve an alliance with the King of France.

But whatever comfort he derived from these assurances seems to have made little difference to his opinion for, he informed his Sovereign, Louise's day was definitely past and the whole of England would be extremely glad when they saw her out of the country. Indeed, on one occasion, at the theatre, the horrified Ambassador overheard some young bloods abusing her and Sunderland and, immediately afterwards, drink to the health of Monmouth.

But the town, which had so short a time before been filled with the troubles of the Popish Plot, was now given over entirely to the discussion of the succession. As soon as Parliament met, Charles, in a lengthy speech, having reference to the late Popish Plot, made it abundantly clear that in no way would he allow the succession to be interfered

with. James was the heir and, so long as he, Charles, was living, James would remain the heir.

But Charles was powerless. Men's minds, that were already inflamed by the late plot, saw in a Bill of Exclusion for York the only hope of uniting the country. Even Louise, for some reason of her own (it may have been, as Burnet suggests, that she imagined her son might have the crown), was against him : urging in public the rights of Orange, though she had long ago finished with the swaggering Monmouth. What she intended to do when the Dutchman came to the throne she never divulged : but she must surely have known that a land that had seen the exclusion of the rightful heir on grounds of religion would have had little use for the late King's mistress who practised Confession.

It is doubtful if she was able to see as far ahead as that. Now as always she was beset on all sides by those who hated her and wanted her out of the kingdom, and it is possible that in her championship she saw men's minds turn towards her, forgetting their hate and distrust and even holding out a welcome to her should she turn traitor to Louis and enter the National Church. For England was home to her now. The visit to France, of which no records save the date of arrival and date of departure survive, must have disappointed her, finding herself not the great lady she had imagined, not even such a great lady as she was in foggy Whitehall. It was England now for the rest of her life, and if it was England she'd best make the most of it, turning herself to those people whom for so long she had hated and despised as they hated and distrusted her.

But the popular prejudice and outcry was enough for Charles to send stubborn James out of the country into Scotland where, more Protestant than

the Protestants themselves, they were still more Stuart and Royalist than any in England: and, on October 21st, Charles, feeling the strain and walking slowly and haltingly through the dying leaves, came to open his Parliament. He found them in savage mood. The agents of Shaftesbury and Sunderland had moved among them. Barillon's money bags had been opened again and again. Even those honest ones were no less intractable than the others. And the King, starting quietly, begging for supplies and the money to garrison Tangier, found himself promising religious security. The House rose and shouted and cheered to the roof. Stolid men threw their hats in the air. The populace waiting outside in the courtyard whispered that Charles had forsaken his brother.

He had not finished. Standing there, his face white and set, he knew that now, if ever, was the time when he could regain his kingdom, when bonfires would be lit at every street, when they would greet him as they had after the nine years' exile and had rung all the bells. But he had not finished—"that rogue, Charles Stuart," "above two yds. high," has been abused and railed at and stormed at for over two hundred years. Men have seen him as traitor and sensualist and utterly selfish: but the cold fact remains that Charles was no traitor. Anything he did he did for the good of his country that, slowly, for twenty-five years, he built up from Noll Cromwell's extravagance. "That rogue, Charles Stuart" might have won now, have gone down to his grave the saviour of his people in popular esteem, while James wandered, as James, later, was to wander, nameless and complaining.

The tumult died. The King spoke again. "But," he added, "that which I value above all the treasure in the world, and which I am sure will

give me greater strength and reputation both at home and abroad than any treasure can do is a perfect union among ourselves. Nothing but this can restore the kingdom to that strength and vigour that it seems to have lost: and raise us again to that consideration which England hath usually had. All Europe have their eyes upon this assembly; and think their own happiness and misery as well as ours will depend upon it. If we should be so unhappy as to fall into such a misunderstanding among ourselves as would render our friendship unsafe to trust to, it will not be wondered at if our neighbours begin to take fresh resolutions and perhaps such as may be fatal to us. Let us therefore take care that we do not gratify our enemies and discourage our friends by any unseasonable disputes. If any such do happen, the world will see it was no fault of mine, for I have done all that was possible for me to do to keep you in peace while I live and to leave you so when I die."

He stopped speaking. The faces that had been open and smiling a little before now scowled at him. Men moved uncomfortably in their seats or where they stood, as Russell, swaggering, rose and shouted that this was no time for pretty speeches when, with the Papists abroad and a Papist successor, every Protestant in the land might be murdered in his bed.

Charles listened. There was nothing he could say now. Nothing he could do. He had set himself a task. He had performed that task and these doltish, traitorous fools whom he ruled would have none of it. In the days that followed they set to with an indefatigable zeal on the work they loved. They imprisoned without trial those who differed in any way from themselves. To one of their number who had thrown doubts on the authenticity

of the plot, they replied by expelling him from their assembly: and they prepared to discredit the Judges who had dared to acquit any of the accused. To be the King's man was synonymous with being a traitor, and Louise and Sunderland had both gone over to the enemy camp.

A fortnight after their meeting the Exclusion Bill was read in the Commons, while all the land waited and Orange wrote to the Secretary Jenkins, "May God make people wise and moderate for surely on this meeting of Parliament depends the good or ill fortune of Europe." But moderation was far from Parliament then. Of those who hated the Bill only three—Seymour, Hyde and Jenkins—dared speak against it: and on the 15th Russell, frantic with impatience, his ugly mob standing behind him, introduced the Bill to the Lords. Charles stood and listened while Shaftesbury and vacillating Essex and that weak fool Monmouth spoke for the Bill and only Halifax, his voice firm as a clarion, rose to oppose it. Sunderland, who was plotting with William of Orange, and had sworn great oaths that no foreigner should ever rule England, rose to his feet time and again to speak for the Bill. But at midnight the Bill was thrown out by 33 votes and Charles, weary almost to death, walked back to Whitehall, passing Portsmouth's apartments: because again he was completely alone.

The next day the Commons, savage at the failure of their measure, attacked all those who had opposed them. Halifax, who had spoken so bravely, was to be the first victim: but Charles stood firm: and when they presented Charles with an address to remove him, the King refused.

But Stafford—one of the Catholic Lords in the Tower—did not escape. He was hated by all. He was old and sick and reputed a coward. If

he was threatened, they cried, he would give false evidence against York and the plot would live again. But Stafford stood firm. For nine days he faced his judges while Charles sat listening and Louise, in the gallery, with the other ladies, wondered what would be the outcome. The Lord would not speak. Alone, with no counsel, forbidden the right to cross-examine the witnesses brought against him, the old man heard himself declared a traitor and condemned to be hanged and quartered and his bowels hawked round the city.

The King could do nothing : or rather all he could do was to reduce the sentence to beheading and be insulted by Russell who demanded the full sentence : and by the Sheriffs who wished to obey Russell.

By Christmas men talked again of civil war, and York wisely stayed in Scotland while Monmouth, still swaggering, still drunk with his own importance, marched from Wapping to Soho mid a crowd of tipsy seamen. But, by the New Year, Shaftesbury, angry at all delay, was whispering to Warcup the Judge that the time had come when Charles must go the way of his father. Warcup, faithful to no one, told Charles, and the King heard next day that Parliament had declared that any who prorogued them was a traitor, a Papist and an ally of France.

He laughed as he heard it and was light-hearted in Louise's apartments that night ; but next morning he was up betimes, arriving at Westminster before half the Parliament men had the sleep from their eyes and prorogued those who had made the declaration without any explanation.

The laugh was with Charles and when, a week later, the writs were issued for the summoning of the new Parliament, the Exclusionists heard to their dismay that the place of assembly was Oxford.

Babel broke loose. Those who had depended on the presence of the London mob to get their Bills passed appeared before the King with petition after petition that the place should be changed to Westminster. But Charles was scornful. He had the measure of his enemies now and he knew how feeble they were at heart.

But, if Charles was sure of himself, Louis of France was far from satisfied. The Exclusion Bill had frightened him. The King of England, who had seemed for so long to be in his pocket, might, it was whispered, gain popular support, not by recognizing Monmouth, but by appointing Dutch and Protestant William, whose whole life had been spent till now in opposing Louis, as his heir.

He grew more nervous still when, from Barillon, he heard of Louise's support of Orange and of her open statement that she preferred English ways to French ones. If once William succeeded to the English throne, it seemed to Louis that it would mean the end of all hopes for his empire. Even the Parliament whom he had bribed had failed him. No matter how much gold they jingled in their pockets time and again honest Englishmen were betrayed into expressions of the rankest hostility against France. And James, who saw in France his only hope, managed to keep Louis in a state of continual unrest by his wily letters, in which he assured him that the chance of William's acknowledgment as heir was overwhelming.

There was only one thing to do. Parliament had been bribed as a measure of economy. Now more French gold must be paid to the King who, despite his assurance that the country must be ruled by its laws without his interference, did, nevertheless, contrive to get what he wanted done.

As long ago as October, Louis had been in

touch with Barillon, urging him to sound Charles on the possibilities of a future alliance and this time preaching no sermons on the fallibility of Charles's promises. Louise, having set her cap at Orange and, for her pains, been attacked by Shaftesbury in the House, modified her approach and looked to her exchequer. It was nearly empty. The whole country, with the exception of the squirearchy, was in a state of alarming poverty. Charles himself faced Christmas with unpaid servants, a guard crying out for its wages, the pressing debts of his ladies and "scarce enough bread in the palace." Dutch William, poverty stricken through his unceasing turmoil against Louis, offered no assistance, and Louise, thinking of her pocket, terminated her short association with Whiggery and looked to the Tories.

But Charles for once did not trust her. The insults that she had been used to receive in the city had spread to the palace. Mulgrave, against whom Rochester had fought his duel and who had succeeded Rochester as Dryden's patron, suggested that she was not even faithful to the King in affairs of the bed. Whereat Louise, forgetting that she was no orange girl or actress, slapped his face and a great hubbub ensued.

Late in the year the usual roles were reversed and Louis, still doubtful of Louise, approached Charles through Barillon with an offer of money. But, although Charles was in desperate need and Portsmouth was pressing him for her quarter's allowance, he held out, remembering the terms Louis had tried to force him to accept a year earlier. This time it was Louis who needed the alliance and Charles who was in a position to dictate. Parliament met and wrangled. Men saw portents in the heavens. A mad monk dreamed that Louis gave birth to a monster and was immediately,

despite his habit, regarded as a second Christ and fêted through the city. But Charles would not hurry.

He avoided Barillon till that worthy, agitated by the reception of despatches from Louis, visited Louise and, in a spirit of odd humility, asked her to intercede.

She tried. At a basset party that she gave in her apartments, at which they all talked of the death of Gwynn's child and mad Rochester's repentance, she drew Charles aside and together they walked out of the palace, past the guards (though Rochester's footman was there no longer) and down to the river.

They waited by the King's barge. Across the water bonfires could be seen and the voices of men heard as they shouted for Monmouth, remembering that only a week earlier a London alderman had seen a vision in which Monmouth, like Elijah, rode in a chariot of fire.

Men's hearts stood still at the time that the King and the French mistress stood by the river, watching the bonfires, hearing the shouts of the people. They had come a long way together to the banks of the river. Without exception Louise was the only person in his kingdom who knew the history of the past ten years. And, at the last, she, too, had failed him, supporting first Monmouth, then Orange. Standing there, she tried to persuade him of her loyalty. The mob, she said, had nearly had her. They had cried for her blood in the Commons. That time Charles had saved her, but could he save her and could he save himself yet again? There was, they saw, only one way. Parliament must never again be in a position to dictate terms. Charles must have money so that, when the Faithful Commons met at Oxford, he need have no fear of them.

Charles, however, was wary. His cousin, Louis, who did so much from cousinly love, was now almost overwhelming in his pressure on the English King. Very well, Charles decided, he would accept, but only under conditions, and this time his own conditions and not those of the French King.

Louise was satisfied and together they returned to the party. Barillon, seeing them enter, was in such a hurry to hear the result of the interview that Charles laughed outright in his face.

Two days later the French Ambassador was able to assure Charles that Louis would keep him financially independent of Parliament, would not attack the Netherlands and would require Charles to stand firm for the Succession and gradually withdraw from his alliances against France. As Charles was set on both these things already he had no objection to signing any number of documents; and, with a light heart, travelling with the Queen in his own carriage and with Nell and Louise following in theirs, he repaired to "that ancient home of all royalty," Oxford.

He met with a reception such as he had not had in his kingdom for years. "All the way the King passed were such shoutings, acclamations and ringing of bells, made by loyal hearts and smart lads of the layetie of Oxford that the aire was pierced, that the clouds seemed to divide. The general cry was 'Long Live King Charles,' and many drawing up to the very coach windows, cried 'Let the King live and the devill hang up all the round heads' at which His Majesty smiled and seemed well pleased. The throng and the violence of the people to express their affection was such that the coach was scarce able to pass. . . . The youths were all on fire. Their hats did continuallie flie and, seriouslie, had you been

there, you would have thought that they would have thrown away their very heads and leggs. Here was an arm for joy flung out, but by what art they ever found their way back, let the R(oyal) S(ociety) tell you.

“At the King’s coming into the spacious quadrangle of Christ Church, what by the shouts and the melodious ringing of the ten statelie bells there, the college sounded and the buildings did learn from its scholars to echo forth his Majesty’s welcome. You might have heard it ring againe and againe ‘Welcome! Welcome!! Thrice Welcome!!! Charles the Great!!’”

So much for the loyalty of the people of Oxford; but when the Parliament men assembled, “all very solemn and in studied mien” it was soon obvious that Shaftesbury had been doing his work well. For four peaceful days Charles had been walking in the meadows at Abingdon, had been beagling with Chiffinch, had, in the old rooms at Christchurch, dined in candlelight with Louise and the Queen.

But by March 19th the Parliament men trooped into the town. Monmouth swaggered past Louise’s lodgings and blew her kisses. Shaftesbury, “of a black countenance,” lodged himself in Balliol; and all the roads were blocked by the retainers of the members, wearing badges, “No Popery.” The mood was ugly. The good people of Oxford, as ever leagues removed from the University authorities, were fearful of trouble. What if King Charles was a Papist? What if the Frenchwoman was in the pay of the Pope? As a carriage passed through the streets the mob, seeing the livery which they thought was that of Portsmouth, rushed to attack it. The horses plunged and reared while coachmen and postilions were powerless in that rabble. Suddenly a face appeared at the window, that of

Nell, laughing, "Be civil, good people, I am the *Protestant* whore."

They loved her for it. It was a triumphal procession after that while Louise sat in her apartments, not daring to appear save in the Court where Charles was preparing to meet the Houses.

On March 24th, Shaftesbury, still busily intriguing, came to Charles's apartments where Louise was and presented a paper. He begged Charles to appoint Monmouth to succeed him as that, he affirmed, was the only way to prevent civil war. Charles listened patiently. He declared his love for his son, but, he swore, nothing in this world would ever make him deprive York of his rightful succession.

Shaftesbury, striding up and down, ridiculous in his wrath, swore in his turn that the King should be made to see reason. Those standing by wondered that the King would tolerate such insolence. But Charles, with great dignity, listened to the end of the tirade. He smiled at Shaftesbury, "My Lord," he said at last, "let there be no self-delusion. I will never yield and I will not be intimidated. The older I grow the more steadfast I become and I will not stain my reputation in the little time that perhaps remains for me to live."

Shaftesbury, calling his retainers about him, left the apartments, and later that day Halifax, still fighting a battle for his King, proposed a compromise—that James be banished for life and Orange reign as Regent for Mary.

But the Commons were furious. They would not even consider it and plunged into more and more bitter diatribes against York. Barillon wrote post-haste to Louis, informing him of Shaftesbury's visit and the King's rejection. Louise sent messengers to Barillon that the session would soon be over. The King had stood firm by what he had

promised. Let Louis look to his part of the bargain and despatch the bonds.

For it was becoming abundantly clear that nothing would now be discussed with the furious Commons. Anger and fear had blinded them. By the end of the month Charles had decided to dissolve them again and, fearful of the riots that Shaftesbury's men might engineer, told Louise that she must depart.

The Royal carriages left that same day, Louise and the Queen travelling together, while Nell, the darling of the people, who had nothing to fear, remained in the city. They drove a day out of Oxford on the road to Windsor.

While they rested the next day Charles walked down to the great hall at Christchurch where the Lords were sitting. He wore his ordinary clothes, his state garments following him in a sedan chair. In the great hall, before the amazed eyes of the Lords, "that rogue, Charles Stuart," donned his robes. Black Rod hurried to summon the Commons, while a few miles out of Oxford, in a country inn, Louise and the Queen chatted, remembering that soon there would be money at Court. The angry Commons streamed into the hall, shouting and jostling, furious that they should have been summoned peremptorily; and "the noise was such and the shouting so loud that the first Sergeant at Arms cried out three times, 'Silence in the King's Name.'"

Charles, smiling, ordered Finch to do his duty and, after that, declared the Parliament was dissolved. There was a ghastly silence. Then "with dreadful faces" hell broke loose. The Parliament men who had come to do so much, who had boasted at home of what they would accomplish, were to go home having done nothing but quarrel and compass their own disgrace and destruction

and earn the doubtful distinction of being the shortest Parliament that ever existed.

But Charles, "with a most pleasing and cheerful countenance," laid his hand on the shoulder of young Bruce who was standing by and said: "I am now a better man than you were a quarter of an hour since. You had better have one king than five hundred," "and bade us all go to our homes and stay there till further orders. . . . He dined in public and with music . . . and retiring into a room, he went privately down a backstairs and slipped into Sir Edward Seymour's coach (and there was not so much as one in his livery or guards that were on the roads), and the next Monday," having spent the night with Louise at Windsor, "he came to Whitehall."

Shaftesbury meanwhile, after Charles had departed, begged the Lords to remain seated and take no notice of the dissolution. He sent a message to the Commons to the same effect. But these gentlemen, despite their noise, remembered that Charles had a regiment round Oxford and for fear that, "if they did not disperse the King would come and pull them out by the ears," crept away.

Charles had won a great victory. The succession was assured and the French gold began to trickle over. A great burst of loyalty followed Charles wherever he went, so that, by the summer, he had Shaftesbury arrested on a charge of producing false witnesses for the Popish Plot. But London would have nothing to do with an attack on their leader. The Jury threw out the bill and every bell in the city rang while bonfires blazed and Shaftesbury swaggered and fomented in coffee shops and "talked damnable treason."

And so that summer passed and Charles was tired and Louise, having written to Louis of the great things that had happened and of her own

share in bringing them to pass, begged that she might draw a quarter's salary in advance and go to Versailles.

The King gave his permission while Barillon and Charles both gave her letters to Louis asking that she might have the right of sitting on the tabouret in the Queen's presence. As soon as she had departed, Charles, wearied of the continual strife and stir in London, set out for Newmarket, where he supped with his friends, the jockeys, went hunting and racing and hawking and visited Cambridge.

He had earned his rest.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN

AS soon as the news had got abroad that Portsmouth was leaving for France, her enemies set to work circulating rumours that, having obtained all she could, she intended leaving the country and making her permanent home at Versailles.

Barillon wrote to his master: "The King of England has charged me to supplicate Your Majesty to accord to her your protection for the arrangement of her private affairs in France. I turned the conversation to another subject when he spoke about the wish that Your Majesty should withdraw the domain of Aubigny from the Crown to give it to her. But I made him hope that Your Majesty would give her other marks of kindness. The truth about her is that she has shown great, constant and intelligent zeal for Your Majesty's interests, and given me numberless useful hints and pieces of information. She believes that the King of England wishes to further Your Majesty's interests. The enemies of the Duchess of Portsmouth give out that she is going to France to settle there."

"She wished," Henri Forneron wrote, "to appear at the Court of France in the splendour of her rank of favourite. She wished to recount herself to Louis XIV all she had done to bring about the indissoluble union of the two nations. It is the hour of her pride and of her splendour, the hour of

her triumph in the midst of the Frenchwomen who had seen her poor and humble."

And she had no fear in leaving Charles now. Charles was bound to her, as he had been to no other of his mistresses, by force of their common political aspirations and by force of the length of their association and by force of Louise's real affection for Charles.

None of the others had been constant as she had been. . . . Even Nell had had her lovers, notable before Charles had adopted her, not always discreet after her establishment. And Hortense, with her passionate nature, had been quite unable to resist the attentions of the Portuguese Ambassador, who made himself ridiculous as he followed her about the Court. In addition to the Ambassador, there was the Prince of Monaco who stayed two years in London for her sake and young Ralph Montague who was willing to leap over the moon to do her a service.

But it had been Monaco to whom, in the end, Hortense had given way, throwing aside the King of England as though he were some soiled garment, as she had thrown him aside in the days of his exile, and dashing to the ground the hopes of all those who, in her person, had seen the collapse of Portsmouth.

Charles was furious. He was in no mind to tolerate another Cleveland; and though later, on hearing that the Duc Mazarin had stopped his pension, Charles again granted his, he had little use for the lady.

Meanwhile at Versailles Louise was the guest of honour. "There has never been a parallel for the treatment she meets here," St. Simon wrote. "When, on a high holiday, she went to visit the Capucines in the Rue St. Honoré, the poor monks, who were told beforehand of her intention, came

out processionally to receive her, with cross, holy water and incense. They received her just as if she had been the Queen and threw her all in a heap, she not expecting so much honour."

Charles immediately heard of it and, delighted, he sent Louis "his best thanks for the kindness he had shown the Duchess of Portsmouth."

Life became one long round of festivities: at Versailles, at St. Cloud, at Aubigny where she spent a few days and then at Bourbonne-les-Bains where she spent six weeks with Lady Pembroke, her sister, deriving much benefit from the waters. But, although she spent a few days in Brittany with her parents, the middle of July saw her back at the Court, listening to Louis' flattery and receiving, through Barillon, news from Whitehall.

By the end of the month she was back in London. The news of her reception in France had reached the capital before the lady herself. Barillon, like some social weather-cock, listened and formed conclusions and decided: "She has never been treated here as a person of consequence previously. She and the Duke of York are very intimate, the homage paid her by Louis XIV being like sunshine, gilding and glorifying an insignificant object."

Charles was delighted with her, and James who had, since the Exclusion Bill, regarded her with suspicion, was now persuaded by Charles that all she had done had been done at his order to gain the confidence of Shaftesbury and be that worthy's undoing.

It became dangerous to annoy her. She, who had for so long suffered insults without the means of retaliation, now looked to Charles to avenge her. When the Dutch Ambassador, Van Beuninghen, drew attention to the fact that Barillon had access to her chamber at all hours of the day or night, Charles sent for him and ordered him to beg her pardon and "to give all the explanations necessary

of the sincerity of his intentions and of his unwillingness to fail in any way in respect towards a lady for whom his Brittanic Majesty showed so much consideration." And afterwards the wretched little man crept to Louise's apartments and made his personal apologies.

The Queen herself, who had always liked Louise, now saw to it that her ladies treated her with great respect, and when Miss Philis Temple wagged her tongue foolishly before Lady Conway, who thereupon reported the matter, the Queen sent for her, scolded her roundly and, to make the lesson stick, took away her salary.

The tide was flowing with her now as, in all the years since she had first landed with Minette, it had never flowed before. And with Charles, too, things were easier. No longer now had he any opposition to fear. Tories had been elected as London Sheriffs, though Shaftesbury, who had escaped once, now hid in the city, whispering yet again in the coffee shops and stirring up insurrection.

But he could gain no support. Those who, in the old days, might have been with him, saw that now Charles Stuart was too much for them and that, whatsoever they did, so long as Charles Stuart sat on the throne, he would be a step in advance of them. One by one they deserted Shaftesbury. Like rats leaving a ship they crept away and only the chief rat stayed behind, searching this way and that way for escape and, at last, flying to Dutch William for sanctuary, dying there unlamented only two months later.

But, if Shaftesbury had gone, there were others who, not wishing to act as he had acted, still thought as he had thought. Monmouth, Essex, Russell, Algernon Sidney called together their friends to start an agitation and insurrection that would compel Charles to summon Parliament.

Other men, more desperate, formed a plot to capture or kill both Charles and York as they passed The Rye House on their way home from Newmarket. All was in readiness. The conspirators had horses and gunpowder to hand when a fire broke out in the Palace at Newmarket and Charles and his brother returned to Whitehall a few days earlier than they had intended.

The conspirators, cowering now wherever they might hope to hide, were betrayed and arrested. Only Grey and Monmouth escaped, while Howard turned traitor on the traitors themselves and was pardoned. A Grand Jury brought in a true bill against Monmouth, Essex and Russell and twenty-three others. On the day following Essex cut his own throat and Charles, who was deeply distressed, remembering that the father of the Earl had died on the scaffold for his father, said : " My Lord of Essex need not to have despaired of mercy ; for I owed him a life."

But towards Russell the King showed no mercy. He was determined that this man should die. And, though Louise came to him, weeping and pleading and begging on her knees, all he would do was to commute the sentence to beheading, remembering that that had been more than Russell had been willing to do for Stafford. So, at the end of July, with a quiet dignity that had not always been there in his life, Russell mounted the scaffold in Lincoln's Inn Fields and paid with his head.

Thus the King triumphed. He had not much further to go on his journey. He would make what shift he could to govern alone. Parliaments, he remembered, his father had had enough to do with them. And, in Louise's apartments, he entered into discussion with the Duchess and Barillon to see what further monies could be obtained from Louis.

CHAPTER XIII

SHE BECAME THE QUEEN . . .

HONOURS, and these not only from the King, were coming to Louise now. For allowing Louis to take possession of Luxemburg Charles received £300,000. He was freed of parliaments and, for the rest of his reign he managed to make shift without one.

James, sure of his own succession, no longer opposed Louise and was to be seen night after night in the Duchess's rooms at her card parties and her intimate candle-lit supper parties. It seemed at last as though, after so long struggle and strife, the struggle and strife were to be forgotten and the government of the country was to rest in her hands. She was not incapable. She had two masters to please ; but her task was made the easier because, in pleasing Louis, she was doing what Charles would be bound to do anyway.

So it was James and Lawrence Hyde who, so soon after the mad Earl's death, had been created Earl of Rochester, who discussed all affairs of State with Louise and only, in the end, submitted them to the King for approval.

It was her reward and the reward was the sweeter in that really loving Charles as she had loved his sister, Minette, and her brother, Sebastian, she knew that, without her and without the part she had played for Louis, the King would be no king at all, but would be hunted again from Court to Court of warring Europe or lie among the

heather of that northern kingdom she had never seen.

And not even James, who had reviled her so loudly, who had proclaimed her traitor and harlot, not even James could hold out against her. He consulted her about the marriage of his daughter, Anne, to Prince George of Denmark. He begged her to write to Louis on his behalf, sounding that monarch as to his own reactions to the match. And it was Louise who sent Anne's portrait to Copenhagen for it to be stared at and admired as, years ago, the portrait of another Anne had been sent to England with such disappointing results.

But the results here were not disappointing. There was a marriage, not so popular if more spectacular than that of Mary to Dutch William ; but popular enough because Denmark was no ally of France and the Protestantism of the line was strengthened. And for Louise, from the father of the groom, came a portrait of himself, on which Barillon gazed and which he admired and of which he became enraptured, finally valuing it at fifteen hundred guineas.

She became the Queen while the Queen herself, happy to be relieved of affairs of state that she had never understood, stayed in her own apartments or was rowed down the river or listened to the counsels of her peculiar confessors.

She became the Queen. When the Grand Prior of France, the nephew of Hortense, arrived in London in the torrid summer of 1683, he attended on Louise, ignoring Catherine and his aunt and displeasing Charles by so doing. But Charles's displeasure was as nothing to the tumult of jealousy when the Grand Prior openly and passionately declared his love for the Duchess and set the Court by the ears by his indiscretions, even forcing Barillon to write to his master that the Grand Prior

must be recalled if he did not wish to ruin the work that Louise had done.

But they did not recall him. . . . He and Louise would have made so lovely a pair—he twenty-eight and she, looking younger, so few years older. But she was the Queen. She was greater than the Queen and she was tied to that swarthy-faced man who had caused her so much uneasiness, whom she had laboured so hard to save . . . and whom she loved with a tenderness that on his death-bed did not desert him, sending him Huddleston and weeping in her apartments.

She became the Queen. When that year the Embassy of the Sultan of Morocco arrived in London it was in Louise's apartments that the audiences were given; that the dark-faced men sat down with "the King's natural children, Lady Lichfield and Lady Sussex, the Duchess of Portsmouth, Nelly, etc., concubines and cattell of that sort, as splendid as jewels and excesse of bravery could make them."¹

A month later when Louis, without asking permission, sent the French fleet into the Channel, Louise went to Charles and "took great pains," says Barillon, "to make the King understand that it was not a breach of confidence and that he ought not to allow anyone to discover that it was not by arrangement, lest those who wished to destroy his friendship with Louis XIV should make use of it."

And at this time the splendour of her apartments was such that sober old Evelyn wrote: "Following His Majesty this morning through the Gallery I went, with the few who attended him, into the Duchess of Portsmouth's dressing-room within her bed-chamber, where she was in her morning loose garment, her maids combing her, newly out of bed; but that which engaged my curiosity was

¹ Evelyn.

the rich and splendid furniture of this woman's apartments, now twice or thrice pulled down to satisfy her prodigal and expensive pleasure, while Her Majesty's does not exceed some gentlemen's ladies in furniture and accommodation. Here I saw the new fabric of French tapestry, for design and tenderness of work, and incomparable imitation of the best painting, beyond anything I have ever beheld. Some pieces had Versailles, St. Germaines and other palaces of the French King, with huntings, figures and landscapes, exotic fowls and all to the life rarely done. Then for Japan cabinets, skreens, pendule clocks, great vases, wrought plate, tables, stands, chimney furniture, sconces, branches, brasseries, etc., all of massy silver and out of number, besides some of Her Majesty's best paintings."

The Grand Prior lingered on. His visits to Louise became more troublesome to Charles who, jealous of the younger man's personal attractions, sent him word to remain away from the Duchess. For a little while he was obeyed and then de Vendôme, more madly infatuated than ever, appeared again at Louise's *salon*.

Charles, not wishing to speak of the matter to either Louise or the Grand Prior, sent for Barillon and, in a painful interview, asked him to inform his countryman that he would be obliged to him if he would move out of the country. Barillon did his best, writing to Louis: "I informed the Grand Prior of this as gently as possible and I endeavoured to persuade him to withdraw without making any scandal. He told me that he would not withdraw, unless the King gave the order with his own mouth, and urged me to obtain an audience for him. I begged the King to permit the Grand Prior to receive his Commands himself: but I had considerable difficulty in obtaining

this. . . . The Grand Prior, however, was not disposed to leave the country and he declined to be persuaded."

For a few days Charles waited until, exasperated, he sent the Lieutenant of the Guards to inform de Vendôme that, if he were not gone in two days, he would have him escorted to Dover and put on board the packet.

De Vendôme, seeing Louise every day, prevaricated. Would it not be sufficient, he suggested, if he retired into the country and were not forced to leave England altogether? But Charles would have none of it. He insisted that he leave the country, and when the Grand Prior offered to do so on condition that he might return at his convenience, Charles lost his temper and appealed to Louise.

Louise was troubled, for there was nothing she desired less than a quarrel with Charles and she used all her persuasions to get de Vendôme to leave the country. The affair dragged on for months. The wretched lover pleaded in vain while Charles, now that he was sure of Louise, could afford to laugh at him. But by the end of November the troublesome suitor had gone and Barillon reported that the friends of the Duchess were mightily relieved, for they "believe that she has got out of an affair that might have ruined her."

But Louise was not so happy. While the Grand Prior had been in England she had written him letters . . . letters that had been none too discreet. From Holland, whither he had retreated, the chivalrous lover threatened to publish them. "It appears to me," Barillon wrote, "that Madame de Portsmouth and the Grand Prior are not too satisfied with one another. I know that she was apprehensive lest he should show her letters. The ruth is that he did not wish to leave her and that he hoped to derive great advantages and great

consideration from his intimacy with Madame de Portsmouth. All that appears well ended, but Madame de Portsmouth is not without uneasiness lest the Grand Prior should make some scene in public."

Louis was alarmed. Now, after so many years of scheming and building, it looked as though a young lover might, by his impetuosity, destroy the whole edifice. In a mood of no great welcome he wrote to him at the Hague, bidding him return to Versailles, where "a more favourable reception than his conduct in England deserved" awaited him.

More delays followed ; the young lover threatening to come to England ; Louis threatening that, if he did so, he would ask Charles to throw him in prison ; Louise terrified lest he should return or make public her letters. But at last it became clear that nothing was to be gained from delaying. The order was final and, disconsolate, he quitted the Hague and came to Versailles. Charles, rid of his rival, showed that "his fondness for Lady Portsmouth increased much and broke out in very indecent instances. . . . The King caressed and kissed her in view of all the people ; which he had never done on any occasion or to any person formally."

She was the Queen again. That mad indiscretion into which she had been drawn against her own will, that period of uncertainty and doubt was over ; and a few months later, she was wholly delighted when Charles, having deprived Monmouth of the office of Master of the Horse, vested it in her son, the young Duke of Richmond.

A month after this a greater triumph came her way. The City of York begged the Duke of Richmond to accept office as its High Steward. Louise was delighted. In this gesture she saw herself

as having at last overcome the dislike of the people. Honours from the King were one thing to be sought after, but honours from the people were another to be sought the more fervently.

She replied to the Lord Mayor and people of York on behalf of her son, thanking them in the name of the King and herself, who were, she assured him, well pleased that the second city in the county had made so good a choice and promising him and the Corporation their services.

It was a Royal letter ; but now she was a Royal person, who received Royal honours. The evening of the reign had brought both Charles and herself peace and a certain security. But it was the evening ; and the King of England was making preparation that he leave his kingdom and those in it that he loved not unprovided for. To Louis he wrote at this time asking that the fief of Aubigny be created into a Duchy with remainder to the young Duke of Richmond. Barillon was alarmed. He wrote in haste to protest against such an innovation. Already, he argued, the Duchess of Portsmouth had been given the right to sit on the tabouret. What more did she want ?

But Louis was well pleased. Louise had served him well. If the King of England could make her a Duchess, it should not be said that his cousin of France was behind him in generosity. He replied at once that he had given orders for letters patent to be made out.

It was the final triumph—the honour above all others that she had coveted ; the honour for which she had sacrificed so much and so dearly ; and when she heard the good news Louise, despite her knowledge of the world and the cynicism that had grown in her, displayed all the joy of a child and received the congratulations of the whole Court. Only Barillon stood aside, peeking at his snuff-box,

listening in vain for the murmuring against her which honest men in the past had proclaimed.

The murmuring was silent now, for now there were no longer any to grumble. The land was at peace and, as far as it had been for years, prosperous. . . . And the French whore had won. Sunderland and Shaftesbury and black-hearted Russell and mad, devil-inspired Oates and laughing Rochester and the biting tongue of Cleveland, all these had been silenced. Danby had fallen and Dutch William had carried away the heir presumptive and the French whore herself had arranged the marriage of York's younger daughter. And now no longer were there threats and abuse and no longer did the people rail at her and now no longer did Nell, at her mad supper parties, mimic her accent. . . . She was accepted. She was become as one of themselves, these strange, stubborn people, who had never known her, whom she had never understood, but whose King she had guided and kept and loved. And to them all had come peace. . . . To the King chatting with Wycherley and Sedley and Dryden, striding through the streets of the new-built London with Wren, who must run to keep pace with him ; listening to the music that Purcell made ; the holy chanting of Sancroft and Ken ; the happy laughter of men cock-fighting ; the bawdy tales of Nell and the depraved wit of Rochester.

To the King there had come peace.

And to York, returned from Scotland, under as deep an obligation as man could be to Louise, had come peace, too, if only he would take it. But the acceptance of peace was beyond him. He was one who must ever be turning and twisting, struggling and striving, never content to see a thing go right, but that he must try to improve it and, likely as not, ruin it altogether.

To him there had come peace ; but he would never accept it, and Charles, walking with Sir Richard Bulstrode in Hyde Park, confessed his fears : “ As for myself I am weary of travelling and am resolved to go abroad no more. But when I am dead and gone, I know not what my brother will do. I am much afraid that when he comes to wear the crown he will be forced to travel again. And yet I will take care to leave my Kingdoms to him in peace, wishing he may long keep them so. But this hath all of my fears, little of my hopes and less of my reason.”

And so that summer of glorious sun and wearisome drought passed. And so Charles, who was to see no more apple blossom, who was to be gone before the time of the mating of birds again, who was to go out with a laugh as he had come with a laugh ; who was to be a cynic, but a great-hearted cynic, at the end as he had been at the beginning, so Charles went down to Windsor and then on to Winchester, while Louise stayed in Whitehall and had news of the King.

He saw his fleet off Spithead. He had the French musicians with him again. He went hawking and hunting. He heard tales of new machines that had been invented and, with that insatiable curiosity of his, he inspected them. He built a new house. And he returned to London and saw his soldiers whom he had built up from nothing. He supped and danced—but not much—with Louise. He listened to Nell’s lewd jests, but they noticed he did not laugh so much now. And at the beginning of October he went to Newmarket.

He was always indefatigable. He always did everything in a hurry. Ten days after his arrival, as he was hawking, news came that the Duchess of Portsmouth was ill, sick almost to death. The King did not wait. He had not even the time to

tell his companions where he was going. He put his horse on the London road and dug in his spurs.

When he arrived Whitehall was distracted. All business was suspended, while the physicians applied their barbaric remedies and Charles, powerless, stood by. He never left her, a delighted Barillon reported to Louis, who at once, as his part of the cure, issued letters of naturalization to his "very dear and well-beloved cousin the Prince Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond," so that he might succeed to anything Louise had invested in France.

By the New Year Louise was better and the silence in which Christmas had been passed gave way to celebrations such as the Court was used to ; only where before there had been terror and uncertainty and the knowledge that the faithful Commons were up in arms, now there was nothing but peace and a feeling of security and the certainty that after the battle came rest.

At Winchester they were building a new house for Charles. Wren was the architect. The Court had changed. Now there was no longer the licentiousness of Buckingham and Rochester, the wit of Sedley and Wycherley, the biting tongue of Cleveland and the background in a country cottage of the music of Milton. For they were growing old and now there was no one there to be shocked and no one there to accuse or to blame or to scold, no one save old Evelyn who, in the middle of February, came to Whitehall and whose words, like those of some denunciatory prophet of old time, have come down to us.

And, somehow, when the pageant of that most brilliant of all English Kings was to be so soon over, it is appropriate and right that, at the end, there should be a voice, still scolding, still shocked. If that were not so, Charles Stuart and Louise and Nell would seem to have forsaken their parts.

"I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming and all dissoluteness and as it were total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening) which I was witness of . . . the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland and Mazarin, a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset round a large table, a bank of at least two thousand in gold before them. . . . Six days after all was in the dust."

They were the true actors playing their parts till the fall of the curtain.

CHAPTER XIV

FEBRUARY MORNING

AFTER Evelyn had returned to his home to write his strictures on the King's morals, Charles, who was in very good humour, noticed the old Earl of Aylesbury among those at the supper-table. With that customary habit which made him so much more a twentieth-century than a seventeenth-century monarch, the King immediately left his own place and greeted him most graciously : " It is a great wonder, my Lord, for to see you at this hour, but I know very well the reason I never see you ; but I am ashamed that I have never given you more marks of my favour. But I will make it up to your son ; he is now about me, and we shall never part."

And Charles returned to his own place and " did eat with an excellent stomach and one thing very hard of digestion—a goose egg if not two." He was in excellent humour. To young Bruce, Aylesbury's son, he repeated the promise he had made to his father, putting his arm about him as they went to Louise's apartments, " to amuse himself with the company that ate there."

He was very gay. To Louise he showed himself with the old tenderness, kissing her gently in front of them all and begging her to excuse him as he went to his bed.

Young Bruce accompanied him, listening to the King's gay chatter as they traversed the palace, bearing aloft the great lighted candle. They came

to the door of the King's chamber. The King, still laughing, entered, while Bruce handed the candle to a page. As the page took the candle, "although a very large wax candle and without any wind," it suddenly went out. Within the room the King was laughing and playing with his dogs. An unnamable fear clutched at the hearts of young Bruce and the page. Looking at one another with fear, each knew that the going out of the candle was a matter of moment, an evil omen.

But they could say nothing. These two were the only ones who had seen it, and, though Bruce staunchly tried to laugh at his fears, he followed the King into the chamber, where they fell to talking and Charles, mentioning proudly his new palace at Winchester, upbraided Bruce for never coming there, telling him of the plans that were afoot, for, said he: "I shall be so happy this week as to have my house covered with lead." "And God knows," wrote Bruce sorrowfully, "the Saturday following he was put in his coffin."

The age-old rites of the Sovereign's going to bed were performed. Swords were passed under the bed. The warming pan was opened, shown to be harmless, and passed among the sheets. The catches of the windows were seen to, while Charles, taking more time than usual, let them undress him and laughed once or twice and was merry with them as he had always been.

They put him to bed. They withdrew. In the room next to the King's Bruce remembered the candle and shuddered and fell to thinking and wondering so that the night watches passed uneasily for him, for, he wrote afterwards, "several circumstances made the lodging very uneasy—the great grate being filled with Scotch coal that burnt all night; a dozen dogs that came to our bed; and several pendulums that struck at each half and each

quarter, and all not going alike, it was a continual chiming." And the King turned himself sometimes, "not usual for him," while young Bruce lay awake, remembering the candle, and was filled with apprehensions and fears, and Charles Stuart, the sportsman, lay among his dogs; and Charles Stuart, the scientist, heeded not his clocks; and Charles Stuart, the Scot, was warmed by the Scottish coal.

The King slept. But it was morning at last and the King called out, for "we had the liberty to go to his bedside in the morning before anybody came, and might entertain him with discourse at pleasure, and ask of him anything. Unfortunately, a certain modesty possessed me and, besides, we had his ear whenever we pleased. So I rose and turned back the brass knob and the under ones came in to make the fire, and I retired to dress myself in our room. Passing by into the next room to the bedchamber, I found there the physicians and chirurgeons that attended to his heel. Mr. Robert Howard, Groom of the Bedchamber, came to me and asked me if the King had slept and if quietly. I told him that he had turned sometimes. 'Lord,' said he, 'that is an ill omen and contrary to his custom'; and then told me that at rising, he could or would not say one word, that he was pale as ashes and gone to his private closet. On which I came away presently and sent in Mr. Chiffins, the First Page of the Backstairs and Keeper of the Closet, for to beg of him to come to his chamber, for a more bitter morning I never felt and he only in his nightgown. Mr. Chiffins telling me he minded not what he said, I sent him in again (for no other had the liberty), on which he (Charles) came out pale and wan, and had not the liberty of his tongue, for the Earl of Craven, Colonel of the Foot-Guards, being there to take the word, and others spoke to him, but

he answered nothing. It being shaving day the barber told him all was ready. He always sat with his knees against the window, and the barber having fixed the linen on one side, went behind the chair to do the same with the other ; and I, standing close to the chair, he fell into my arms in the most violent fit of apoplexy."

So they set to work. Pathetically and hopelessly they tried the savage remedies of their times. Dr. King bled him while they sent for York ; who, on arrival, found the King in bed again "in pretty good state," the physicians bleeding him copiously, giving him blisters and burning his body with pans of coal wherever they could reach it. But there was no change, York hovered about, one foot in a shoe and one in a slipper. The Queen lay at the bottom of the bed, rubbing her husband's feet. The physicians having bled till they could bleed no longer, dosed him with purgatives and emetics, weakening him, making the fight he was putting up almost impossible.

At noon he stirred and asked for the Queen and the palace stirred because the King had, for the moment, come out of the shadows ; and the news was raced throughout the city, to Charing Cross and Temple Bar as, so soon later, the heralds were to race, bearing the tidings of York's accession.

For a little the dying man stared at the Queen, remembering her, reproaching himself for all they had never meant to each other. He turned away and saw Bruce and held out his hand, saying : "I see you love me dying as well as living."

And so he fell asleep again while Louise waited and wept and sent for Huddlestone, secreting him in her closet, remembering the secret promises she had made to the King, who had saved Huddlestone's life, as the Priest had saved his life, and whose soul Huddlestone must now save. They sat and talked

together and the silence of the palace grew oppressive and Louise, with that Breton shrewdness, prepared herself to send a message to the new King, even while, trembling with tears, she waited for the death of her lover.

All over the palace they whispered while the Priest and the Duchess prayed and Chiffinch remained helpless in his chambers and the Queen tried so valiantly to call the King back to her and an army of physicians and surgeons, in the half-dark room with the blinds drawn, bled and blistered and purged the body that cried out for only one thing—so dumbly and helplessly—rest.

In the city men talked. There was fear of the Catholics, fear of James. They knew Charles. They did not know James, save that he was a Papist and bigoted. In the city men spoke of sending for Monmouth. The news reached the palace. It drifted through the silent passages where the King's dogs wandered, wondering. It came to the King's chamber, so that James, fearful of an insurrection, ordered the ports to be stopped. But, in the streets, up to the gates of the palace, men and women waited, weeping anxiously.

The pendulums struck. As quarter by quarter the King's life ebbed away, that infernal noise, which had been a part of the King, continued. At two he fell into a doze. Amazingly, they allowed him to sleep for a little, not stopping the clocks. They had driven the dogs out; but they left him the clocks. . . . And they gathered round, whispering.

They woke him in the morning, tearing off his blisters and plasters, rejoicing exceedingly as they saw how much it hurt him. "And about seven this morning," Moray wrote, "he began to talk of the way he took his disease very cheerfully to the unspeakable joy of all present."

But they forbade him to talk and the King, smiling feebly, told them that such a treatment would have killed Harry Killigrew.

Another day and another dose of remedies and another denial of the rest that his body needed. And then night came again and it passed and Thursday dawned and with Thursday came the Bishops, led by Sancroft and Ken, who had a voice "like to a nightingale for the sweetness of it, so he was desired by the rest to persuade the King to hearken to them."

But the King, still polite, still charming, waved them away. There was time enough yet, he said, though the doctors did their best to hasten the end and, in her own apartments, Louise, with Huddleston hidden away in a safe place, sent for Barillon who "found her overwhelmed with grief; but instead of speaking to me of her grief and of the loss she was on the point of sustaining, went into her private cabinet and said to me: 'Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, I am about to tell you the greatest secret in the world, and I should lose my head if it were known. The King of England is at the bottom of his heart a Catholic, but he is surrounded by Protestant bishops and no one tells him of the condition in which he is or speaks to him of God. I cannot with decency re-enter the room; besides that the Queen is almost continually there. The Duke of York is thinking of his own affairs and has too many of them to take what care he should of the King's conscience. Go and tell him that I have implored you to warn him to consider what can be done to save the King, his brother's soul.'"

So Barillon hastened away into that room of death and the chiming of clocks and the stench of disease. Drawing James away from the bed, he whispered to him in the Queen's room.

York came hurrying back. He told the company



From a contemporary portrait

KING CHARLES II

to withdraw and spoke in low tones to the King. But at first it seemed as though it was too late. Charles did not understand him, while York, for fifteen full minutes, repeated and repeated his question.

At last the King understood. From far away he remembered other times, other seasons . . . the Penderel brothers and the flight from Worcester and Jane Lane and the butler who had kissed his hand and the blacksmith who had spoken of "that rogue, Charles Stuart," and a quiet-voiced man in the sanctuary that had been Whyteladies.

"For God's sake, brother do ; and lose no time," he was heard to mutter.

So York hurried back. He had forgotten now his own danger. He had forgotten that men were ready to seize on anything that he did and twist it and punish him, chasing him out of his kingdom. For the first time in their lives he and Charles were really united. He went to the Queen. At eight o'clock that night, with the King's strength ebbing away, with the doctors destroying his body, and his brother and wife and mistress saving his soul, they cleared the room, leaving only the Earls of Bath and Feversham near the King's bed. Smuggled, disguised, through a backdoor, bearing the sacrament that had been brought from the Chapel at Somerset House, Huddleston was led in by Chiffinch.

York leant over the King. "Sire, here is a man who saved your body and is now come to save your soul."

The King stirred. His eyes, almost closed for the last time, opened : "He is very welcome," he whispered.

He confessed ; and Huddleston prepared the sacrament while Charles murmured again and again : "Mercy, Sweet Jesus, Mercy," and begged

that he might meet his Saviour in a better position than lying on his back. But Huddleston gently refused him.

And so, with his body wracked and tormented, with his subjects waiting outside the door in an agony of suspicion, with the women he had loved weeping for him, with James risking his life and his crown for him, Charles kept his bargain with Louis, his promise with Louise, his faith with himself.

He had come home and was at peace.

The priest left as he had arrived. Down the backstairs up which Chiffinch had so often brought the young ladies, the cross and the sacrament, the spiritual comfort of a great man, descended.

They let in the crowd again. All night they hovered round the bed. All night those who were with him heard the King speak clearly and with purpose and sense. At midnight the Queen came to him, kneeling beside the bed, holding his hand. He was very tender with her, talking to her gently, until her great heart could bear no longer the sight of his torment and she was carried away fainting. Later she sent to beg his pardon if, at any time, she had failed him. "Alas, poor woman, she beg my pardon? I beg hers with all my heart," he sent her word back.

And so that night passed and his children—all but Monmouth—knelt and were blessed by him; and Sancroft and Ken begged him to bless his Kingdom and the King struggled up in his bed and did so. . . . And presently, while he still had his strength, out of that sea of faces, curious, unhappy, professional, that crowded round his bed, his eyes found those of York. He tried to speak, but his strength was too small now and York, leaning over, heard him whisper to guard Louise and her child and "not let poor Nelly starve."

And the clocks struck and the dogs scratched at the door and those he loved, save poor, blundering James, were locked away from him . . . and at six o'clock in the morning the King asked them to open the curtains, "that I may once more see day." As they did so the face of the King grew very peaceful and still. He lay watching the shadows that crept over the walls as the sun rose until his sight failed him and he could see no more.

He stopped trying to speak. They bled him again ; but they could do nothing now. Huddleston had done all that he needed and Huddleston had been sent by Louise.

And presently, when it was high noon, they all came out of the chamber, some of them weeping and some of them whispering, plotting already ; and some to run into the city and some to wait on York who was no longer York, fawning ; and some to go to their rooms and lament because a great man had died.

They left the door open. . . . Only Chiffinch stood there, looking down on his master, while, as they had done for years, all the clocks began to chime and the dogs, finding the door open, crept into the room.

So the King lay with the things he had loved in his life.

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW KING

CHARLES had passed from life into history to take his trial there as his father had taken his in Westminster Hall, to be condemned and acquitted, to have his licentiousness remembered and his statesmanship forgotten, but to remain eternally, triumphantly, himself.

An hour after they had left the King's chamber, York, the new King, having dressed himself and sent his men into the city to proclaim his accession, came privately to Louise's apartments. He found her, still red-eyed from her weeping, sitting at her bureau, staring at the papers which held so much of the history of the past reign; despatches from Louvois, personal notes from Louis, memoranda from Barillon and the cancelled notes for the amounts she had received from the Treasury and the wine licences and the money from Ireland.

They were all—like the dead King—a part of history. Now they were all finished, over and done with; for she was too wise a woman, too experienced in affairs, to be ready yet to give more than ear service to James's protestations of friendship; she had served Charles. Through James, at the last, when it could have served no useful purpose for the French King at Versailles, she had helped Charles to enter the Kingdom of his Church and her Church and the Church of James. But there, after the retreat of Huddleston, bearing the

Sacrament from the death chamber, the union between herself and James had stopped.

Now she put away her papers. Slowly, without haste, as though knowing that she would have no further use for them, she locked the drawer and stood, waiting, listening till James should begin the protestations he had come to make ; promising her, as she knew he would, his protection, pretending he had forgotten her part in the Exclusion Bill, her championship of Monmouth, her one-time sponsorship of Orange.

And James did begin. Clumsily, as though he were not talking to one who had loved his brother, he began expatiating on the excellencies of his own character, the strong arm he was prepared to adopt, the infinite service and use he could be to Louis in Versailles.

She nodded, listening. She had known it all. She had been prepared for it ; and she found herself wondering—as she had wondered so often in the past—how it was that the two brothers could be so different ; how Charles could be charming and cunning and seemingly bewildered, while James went at things like a bull at a gate and often only succeeded in stunning himself.

She promised she would do what she could. But James was not satisfied. In that room, heavy with the scent of women, with the sounds of the muffled bells of Whitehall and Westminster and the far-away city swelling up to meet them, he demanded to know how much he might expect. How much and how soon. . . . He became agitated. He hinted that Louise should write to Louis at once. He told her what he had told Louis himself ; that the people were for Monmouth or Orange and that Catholic York would get little support.

Charles, he declared, had been weak. He had allowed his Parliaments to overrule him. He had

surrendered too much. In himself, James, the French King would find a man after his own heart ; who believed in the rights of kingship and was prepared to fight for those rights.

How much and how soon ?

She shook her head. She could not, she said, tell him. She had never had anything to do with money. Was it true that Charles had received money from Louis ? He surprised her. She had never known it ; but then, after all, money was hardly a woman's affair, was it ? If he wanted that kind of information James would, surely, do better to apply to Barillon. For herself, she was still too distressed, too unhappy to have the heart yet for affairs of State.

So James left her, dissatisfied at what she had told him, convinced that she was holding things back from him, to return to his own rooms and to his Queen, who was already demanding that the Duchess of Portsmouth be treated with less honour than she had received in the past ; and to Sancroft and Ken who were begging him that he would support the Church and abandon the Catholicism to which he clung so tenaciously.

Heavily, with pomposity and a sickening sense of his own importance, he listened and made speeches such as his grandfather, the first James, had made ; and sent a message to Nell that he had not forgotten his brother's charge ; and a message to Chiffinch that " the chargeable ladies " be told that they were needed no more at Court ; and a message to the Canons of Westminster that, for reasons of State, it would be expedient if the late King were buried at once, as hastily and as quietly as possible, lest the people, wishing to do him honour, assembled in too great crowds and there be a riot.

He was afraid ; but he did not quite know what it was that he feared. The shouts of the Parliament

men, who had demanded his exile, still echoed in the Palace and city; the unsatisfactory interview with Louise still rankled; and the soldiers were still returning with reports on the state of the docks and the harbours and that everywhere men were shouting for Monmouth.

Soon the danger from Monmouth became clear. News reached London of an armed rising in the West, of a pathetic company of yeomen and labourers, armed with poles and bill-hooks, proceeding to Lyme to rally round James's vain nephew.

The King acted. Now, for the first time in his life, he was responsible only to himself for whatever he did. Charles was no longer there to watch over his actions. The Council might prate and babble, but the Council could be silenced. So a body of men left London that same night to join others already in the West Country who were marching against Monmouth's forces.

James was the King and he was determined that men should know it.

He waited in his rooms. He did not venture out much into the city. The Queen urged him to show his authority and James, listening to her, did as she did, offended all and was friendly with no one.

Meanwhile Barillon, receiving letters from Louis, visited Portsmouth, offering her the condolences of the King at Versailles, suggesting that she divulge to him her plans for the future; how far she considered they might rely on James and, relying on him, what value they might put on his actions.

She was not encouraging. The hasty, almost clandestine burial of Charles, the troops marching against Monmouth, the gossip from the city that reached her through her servants, all confirmed her in the fears that Charles had expressed that James would be forced to go on his travels.

She confided as much to Barillon, and the Frenchman, ever anxious to reach the ear of his sovereign first, sent hasty despatches of what the Duchess of Portsmouth feared. The despatches were too hasty. The messengers he chose were not reliable and the fears of Portsmouth reached James.

He was furious. With his own inflated opinion of kingship allied to his own opinion of himself, he had no time to listen to or to profit by the fears of others. Louise he dared not touch, for Louise was the agent of Louis, but there was another way in which she could be punished, a way that was bound to hurt her more deeply than any personal slight to herself. He chuckled as he considered it. Portsmouth, he knew, had never been wholly favourable to himself. Let Portsmouth, then, beware, for she was not altogether invulnerable.

So James came down to the Lieutenant of the Guard and sent him in search of the young Duke of Richmond, who was found playing in the gardens with the Lady Charlotte Herbert, his cousin. The boy left his games. He was thirteen, handsome and tall for his age, as his father had been tall. He was utterly selfish, the beloved of his mother.

Slowly, he followed the Lieutenant to James's presence, a little frightened of this surly uncle of his, a little bewildered at the peremptoriness of the summons, a little alarmed because his mother, who had always been near the King, was now nowhere in sight.

Straight and slight he stood before Majesty and heard Majesty divest him of his office of Master of the Horse on the grounds of his youth and the impossibility that he could perform the duties satisfactorily.

It meant nothing to him. He had, through James's action, lost nothing that he valued or that

he understood. The interview ended and he returned to his games with the Lady Charlotte.

But for Louise it was no such easy matter to be so lightly dismissed. She sent for Barillon and there in her chamber, where some of Charles's dogs had found a lodging, she urged him to write at once to Louis, complaining of the treatment she had received and begging that the King should threaten to cut off James's supplies.

Louis' reply came in due course, "I have learned with surprise that the new King of England had deprived the Duke of Richmond of the office of Master of the Horse, notwithstanding the manner in which the late King recommended this son of his to his brother."

James heard of it. There was no actual message for him, but that "I am surprised" filled him with alarm, and when Barillon shortly afterwards paid him a smaller amount than he had expected for his first quarter's allowance, he said nothing, but, aware of the mistake he had made, hastened to Louise, ignoring the complaint of his wife that he was associating with "that French Jade" and tried clumsily to repair the damage that had been done. He was very solicitous. He suggested that her house, which had already been rebuilt three times, was no fit place for her. . . . Alterations could be made. No expense need be spared. He was importunate. But she shook her head, refusing anything, merely telling him that she was still a little unhappy at the death of Charles.

James left her and came again, this time broaching boldly the subject of Richmond's dismissal, telling her that a lad of thirteen was hardly capable of carrying out the onerous duties of Master of the Horse; and assuring her that he had been under the impression that Louise had known already of the imminence of his dismissal; and that, were it

not so, the blame could hardly be laid on himself who had taken every measure to keep her informed.

Louise did not believe him. She believed very little these days ; but now, in the solitude that had descended on her since Charles's death, in the desertion of all those who had ever been near her, she was willing to forget and forgive all manner of slights and insults. She had her Exchequer to see to. The money that she had been granted in the last reign ceased automatically on the accession of James. Now, for two months or more, no fresh supplies had come into her house and she was hard put to it to pay her servants their wages.

So she accepted James's explanation and while he was congratulating himself on his diplomacy and statecraft and tact, she set herself to persuade him to settle on her a continuance of the allowance of £19,000 a year she had received from the late King.

But James was not easy to tackle. With that exalted idea and ideal of Kingship that might have belonged to his grandfather, although he might desire Louise's support, he was still of opinion that, in himself, in his own person of the anointed King, lay his great power. Charles had allowed himself to be subsidized by Louis. He had, in James's opinion, never attempted to rule by himself and when Louis or Louise or the Commons had set the pace, Charles had run to it, at no matter what inconvenience to himself. He, James, would be no such easy-going fellow. . . . In himself rested Kingship and already, by his troops pursuing the rag-tag and bobtail that had followed Monmouth, he was proving it.

So Louise had no success with James. England, it seemed, would in future be governed by him and if, in the end, he was chased out of the Kingdom, had not that fool, Charles, suggested it and feared it?

So James left her. He had promised nothing. He had committed himself to nothing. The £19,000 a year was still short of attainment. The Duchess of Portsmouth's position was still impossible to define.

Again she sent for Barillon. Her servants, she told him, were crying out for their wages. Her wardrobe was in a state that it had never known before. Her own personal commitments had fallen sadly into arrear; and while, since seeing James she was not quite so despondent as heretofore, would it not be as well if Louis impressed on the King his own favour to Louise?

Barillon, courteous and a little worried as to his own position, agreed and wrote to Versailles, "It is true that he (J) has twice been to her rooms in the last few days and has given her many marks of confidence and esteem. I am happy to find that she is beginning to think her prospects less dark. She has accepted the reasons put forward by King James for not leaving the place of Master of the Horse to a boy of thirteen who cannot fill it for many years. In thus yielding she hopes to be well used in the settlement of other affairs of major importance. She is now trying to get herself confirmed in the income of £19,000 allowed her by King Charles. She has pressed me to let Your Majesty know that a mark of your esteem would be, in the present conjuncture, of decisive importance to her and that she would thereby secure incomparably better treatment. I have told her that I am commanded to render her any good office in my power and that I have even defended her interests warmly in speaking to the King; that Your Majesty has given her and the Duke of Richmond the highest dignity that you can confer; and that her past services would be remembered even though Your Majesty had never promised

in writing not to forget them. I can see that she does not, apart from Your Majesty's protection, hope for much more from France than for a sum of money to pay her debts and to buy her a dwelling place in Paris. The King of England has told me that he has obtained the promise of the Duchess of Portsmouth not to rear her son as a Protestant, although he must be classed as one, and that if she keeps it, he will do everything in his power for him."

The weeks dragged on. James, accomplishing his revenge on Monmouth, accomplished also in himself the completest self-confidence and assurance. Jeffreys, who had served Louise and whom she had admired both for his appearance and ability, set out in his carriage for the West and there hanged and quartered and harried and transported every honest ploughman who had been duped by Monmouth's good looks.

The country was ablaze with fury. Honest men, fearful for their own skins, saw in the Bloody Assize, a presage of that which James might do to them should they, at any time, wittingly or unwittingly, transgress the Royal pleasure. But though James was the instigator and Jeffreys the perpetrator, there were those who, mindful of the French gold of the last reign, saw in Louise the real cornerstone of the persecution. In the coffee shops, in the taverns, at the back doors of rich men's houses and in the withdrawing rooms of those houses, men and women talked. Sancroft, meeting the Dean of St. Paul's, confided to him that "he had a great weight over his heart" till the Frenchwoman was gone. Sunderland, who had once supported her, now whispered and urged for her removal.

In May Louis reminded James of the honours he had paid to Louise and the valuable link she



From a contemporary portrait

BARON JEFFREYS
Lord Chief Justice of England.
By courtesy of the British Museum.

had proved between his country and England. James read the despatch and, in full view of Barillon, snapped his fingers, telling him that, for all he cared, he was at liberty to carry a message to Louise that he had no further promises to make her.

Barillon, not daring to tell Louis the news, told Louise and was the recipient of all her ill-will and lamentations, while word of the King's snub spread through Whitehall and into the city. Those who had always hated her now saw her end at hand and were convinced that, now the King had showed his hand, nothing could save her. The watermen on the Thames, mindful of the times she and Charles had travelled there together, met in the "Red Bull" at Wapping and drank themselves stupefied, shouting curses on the French strumpet and sending messages of good-will to Nell Gwynn. And the watermen were not alone. In a country where already the King had turned honest men's hearts from him, they talked of Dutch William and Mary, his wife, suggesting that now, surely, the time was ripe when the succession should be assured and all Catholics driven from the land.

The Parliament men, free of Charles at last, met together. In their clubs, in gabled country houses, in the market towns, they talked of the expulsion of Portsmouth and Sunderland and holding a pistol at James's head.

They need not have worried. Frightened, almost daily in tears, seeing the edifice of her own life smashed beyond recognition, Louise was now doing all she could to raise the money to leave the country. Not even her servants were faithful to her. Weekly some loss was reported, something of which she had been robbed, jewels or papers or the secret despatches from Versailles.

In August Barillon wrote to Louis, telling him that the Duchess could stay no longer, and that,

if she stayed, she feared the next Parliament would see her downfall. Might she return to Versailles? She had served the King faithfully. She had done all she could for him. To remain now might mean that all would be lost.

So Louis gave his permission and James, once he knew she was leaving the Kingdom, though he knew also it would mean the loss of a great part of his income, gave her all marks of favour and came down to see her and protested his love and devotion, promising her a perpetual pension of £5000 a year; and a further £2000 during Richmond's minority.

She listened. . . . But she was too heart-broken, too distressed to pay him much heed; for that for which she had worked for so long, the place she had carved for herself, had all deserted her, as life had deserted Charles Stuart and as Monmouth had deserted his followers.

On the day of her departure, James, scarce concealing his joy, came to see her again. He walked to her house, coming across the park, leaving his silly Queen to accuse him of unfaithfulness or what she would.

He was pleased with himself. Already, after less than six months, he had rid himself of Monmouth and now he was ridding himself of Louise. So he was very gracious; and when she wept because she must leave the place where she had been happy, he promised her that she might always keep her apartments and that she would always be welcome at the Court. When she lamented that Richmond would never know the land of his father, he promised her again that, when he was older, he would give him preferment.

Outside the Palace the people waited to see her depart. The end of the fifteen years' travail to France was in sight. Men saw the dawning of a



P. Lely

DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

new era ; and lost sight of the person of the King who had and who would again betray them.

She took leave of her servants. She took leave of the rooms in which she had lived ; where she and Charles had dined ; where Richmond had been born ; the closet in which she had received such a succession of ambassadors. It had become her home, the only home she had known since Madame had died and Sebastian had died and she had entered the King's service.

She took leave. She wept and James bade her "dry her tears," for she would be returning, and she was near to abusing him then for a mealy-mouthed hypocrite. She had turned out her wardrobe ; the clothes she had worn over so many years ; the bridal dress for the marriage at Euston ; the frocks she had had at the time of the birth of her son ; the man's suit of clothes ; the clothes Charles had loved. She had turned them all out, leaving them behind her as a part of life that was done, that was old and worn out and past, as the life of Charles had passed and as the life of Cleveland had passed when she had fled from her creditors.

Cleveland and Nell and Hortense and Rochester and old Sancroft and saintly Huddleston and filthy-tongued Wycherley and plain Miss Sedley and the little Queen who had loved her and forgiven her for taking the love of her husband and with whom she had laughed and been happy. She would not see them again because, in the end, England had beaten her, as Charles, in his turn, had beaten England. It had beaten her, turning her out, after all the years of sojourn there. And all those people whom she had known had been beaten too. One by one the end of the last reign or the years of the present would see them defeated, as Rochester had been defeated by death and Cleveland by her creditors and Monmouth by his

own overweening ambition and vanity ; and only such souls as Huddleston and Ken and Charles himself, remaining true to themselves, could win in the end.

But she herself had, in the end, no one to take leave of ; because all save James had deserted her and James had only not deserted her that he might get a few more shillings from Louis.

She bade him farewell. Her coach, they told her, was waiting. The boat would be ready at Dover. Once more she would travel through the English summer as she had travelled with Charles and the Queen and Madame. So she bade James farewell, not lamenting now, only certain that, at last, she had him at the right valuation, the valuation Charles had put on him during all those years that she and Charles Stuart had ruled the country ; because now, with it behind her, with Courtin and Colbert and Louvois and Barillon away from her ; with the English watch-dogs, having compassed her downfall, with only James, feeble and pompous, left, she knew that she had ruled and that, for those years, the lives of them all had been governed by herself and Charles and the hours they had spent together and the bargains they had struck.

Charles whom she had loved and who had loved her and whose brother was now chasing her out. . . .

She went out to her coach while James watched her go and Barillon whispered last instructions and the servants stood on the stairs and the idle and the curious gathered outside the house to see the last of the strumpet.

She went out to her coach as she had been so often in her life, utterly and desperately and ruthlessly alone.

They placed the rugs over her knees. They lowered the windows. One of them saw to a piece of harness while a horse reared and would have

thrown the others into confusion, had not a groom rushed to his head. And the vulgar and curious watched her, whispering.

Someone hurried down the steps after her, someone they could not see clearly, because the coach blocked the way, who pushed past them all and came to the door of the coach and, taking her hand kissed it, as he had kissed the hand of the King at Whiteladies, the hand of the King as he lay dying. "Sweet Jesus, guard you," they heard him whisper.

He stepped back as the horses threw themselves forward and the heavy coach lurched over the cobbles and they saw who he was and the robe he was wearing and remembered that he was said to have entered the King's chamber and made the King a Papist as he lay dying.

And, suddenly, all that pent-up anger and hatred and loathing, all that distrust and fear of the things for which they stood, were loosed against Louise and Huddleston and a mighty shout broke forth as of a savage beast that has at last tasted blood. And some of them rushed into the road and up the steps of the Palace after the priest, while others, seizing anything on which they could lay their hands, followed the coach of the French mistress, pelting it with dung and mud and stones, calling after her all the foul names they could imagine, till she had left the city behind and there was nothing but the country coming to meet her and the great oak trees which Charles had loved ; and the far-off sea on which she had often feared him lost.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EMPTY YEARS

SHE was given apartments at Versailles. Louis welcomed her, thanking her warmly for all she had done in the past reign and sympathizing with her in the treatment she had received from James, paying her marked attention in public so that the Court ladies, those who had gossiped about her fifteen years earlier, gossiped again and were jealous and hoped for her downfall.

All round her intrigue and suspicion grew and flourished ; and she, who had thought that in her return to France she had come home, found that this was not home. She had no home, for the French regarded her as English while the English loathed her as a French spy.

But she was not dismayed. She had fought for too long to allow herself to become unhappy now. She had, for too many years, stood up to the attacks of the godly and the patriotic and the traitorous to allow the gossip of Court ladies to distress her.

Besides, was she not famous ? Was she not the late mistress of the late King of England ? Had not ambassadors taken their orders from her—Courtin and Colbert and Barillon ? And had not those who disliked her found that she was more powerful than themselves ? She had money. She was not destitute and already Louis was making her promises, suggesting that he should increase her allowance ; for, after all, she deserved nothing less.

So she furnished her apartments. She was a young woman yet, not much over thirty. But, with a kind of foreknowledge, she knew that she had reached the end of one part of her life and that, no matter what came after, nothing would be the same again.

A month after her arrival she sought out her sister, Henriette, who had strangely avoided her.

Henriette, who had left England after Pembroke became too impossible, received Louise in her own house. She was embarrassed. She was not happy in seeing her sister and Louise, sweeping into the room, was amazed to find her obviously with child.

It was the most bitter blow of all. It was this which showed her most clearly that people no longer relied on her ; that, sacrificing everything for Charles, she had lost the faith and confidence and trust of even her own sister.

She wept, not because Henriette had married again ; but because, although there was no shame in the marriage, she had kept it a secret, not telling Louise, who had helped her so greatly against her first husband.

But she dried her tears. Gaily, as though she had not been hurt or surprised, she laughed, asking to meet the husband—the Marquis de Thoïs—and congratulating Henriette because, with her plain looks, she had captured so great a prize.

But the hurt was still there. The whisperings that had followed her in England and that she had hoped to escape in France, were still there, as was the knowledge that, in all that assembly, there were none ready to receive her, not even though Louis himself gave the lead.

She was desperately unhappy. From England came reports that James was none too safe on his throne, reminding her of Charles's fears and the new King's bigoted manners. Reports came too

that Richmond, her son, was fallen into evil ways. He was wasting his life. Already, at the age of fourteen, he was the keeper of a mistress; and, further, the revenue that was due to her was not arriving with the regularity that she demanded.

Money, that had once been so plentiful, became, now that it was scarce, an obsession. Those who spoke with her found her dull and preoccupied, terrified lest old age find her unprepared and unprovided for, as Charles had been fearful that his small army, through lack of funds, would be disbanded, or the men of science deserted or the men of letters starving.

The months passed. She sent messages to Barillon to send over supplies. She sent other messages to keep an eye on young Richmond. But the answers she received were not satisfactory; and all that winter, while the Court at Versailles danced and gambled and made love and drank, she was worrying for the post office dues or the money from Ireland that never arrived; or the state of her lands at Aubigny.

In the spring she could bear it no longer. The Court life wearied her. She seemed to have grown too old or too weary or too worried to be able to enter into it with zest. She had no interest in Henriette, none in Louis' schemes, none in the endless plans and plottings that were evolved round her. So she begged permission to go to England, claiming her duty as a mother and her interest as a business woman as her excuses.

Permission was granted while tongues wagged and those who had been offended because she would have no part in their lives suggested all manner of reasons for her departure.

She left in June. By July Louis, having heard the suggestions of those at Court, was convinced that she must never return. She was, they said, more

English than French. The remark made so long ago that she preferred English ways to French ones had, after all, been true ; and an overwhelming fury seized Louis that this woman should dare to criticize his kingdom.

In the Chamber of Mirrors he set to work giving orders for a *lettre de cachet* to be drawn up for her exile. If she did not like France, she was welcome to stay away. The gossips chattered. They were delighted. Those who had seen her success in England, and been bitterly jealous, now saw her downfall and were equally pleased. Her rather overwhelming manners, her beauty, her place near King Louis, her eternal anecdotes of the Court of England and her Royal lover, her pathetic (had they known they were pathetic) promises that she would help them all, all these would be gone. The Duchess of Portsmouth, who loved England, might stay in England. The Court at Versailles could do very well without her.

But to one person the news of her exile came as a shock and an injustice. Courtin, a little gouty and irascible, a little jealous at the place Barillon was holding in Whitehall, was still imbued with that sense of fair play that he had always shown. To banish Portsmouth seemed to him nothing short of a scandal with reason only in the malicious gossip of jealous women.

Heavily, rather pompously, he gave the Court his opinion. But the Court was not interested. Courtin, it argued, would, being half-English by adoption, inevitably espouse the Duchess's cause.

So the old man, upright, not nervous at all, knowing the unpopularity of that which he contemplated doing, went to the King. He found him in his private closet. He entered unannounced. On the table before the King lay the *lettre de cachet*, only now waiting for the Royal signature. So the

honest old man began to argue. He emphasized the work Louise had done for the King. He reminded him of the French supremacy in the reign of Charles II. He suggested that, hitherto, Louis XIV had never been known as a niggard. He had given honour where honour was due. He had acknowledged his debts and paid them ; and the debt he owed to Louise was a very real one.

Louis listened. In his turn he argued. Had not Louise, to the affront of the King, shown her preference for England and English ways? Was she not in England now? If she preferred England, it would be no loss to her to be exiled from France. Besides, he asked, what proof had they that even now the lady was not selling French secrets to James or his Parliaments as she had sold English ones to Louis and Versailles?

They argued again. Courtin, growing impatient, forgot his gout and obesity and waxed enthusiastic. Did Louis wish to earn a reputation for unfair dealing? Was it his wish that his name should go down to history as that of a man who would betray those who had slaved for him?

At last Louis, ever anxious for his own fair fame, listened. He agreed. He tore up the order, and Courtin, having accomplished that which he had set out to do, left the chamber.

Meanwhile in London Louise, trying vainly to pick up the threads where she had dropped them, had taken up her quarters again in her thrice-built palace. James had been gracious : but Richmond, exhibiting a character similar to that of his half-brother, Monmouth, had shown that he had no time for parental authority. Reared a Catholic, against his mother's wishes, he had now become an Anglican . . . and spent his time drinking and whoring.

But, if her son would have nothing to do with

her, Louise had, at any rate, before her return, the satisfaction of marrying her niece, the Lady Charlotte Herbert, to John Jeffreys, the son of the Judge, and saving for them a portion of Pembroke's fortune.

It was not much to accomplish ; but it was all she did accomplish before sailing again for Versailles and the whispering tongues and the bitterly jealous looks.

In Versailles she settled down again. Money became more scarce. She heard that her son had married the Lady Anne Brudenall. Delighted, she wrote to congratulate him, hoping that marriage would steady him and that he would desert his wild companions. But she was doomed to disappointment. Although in three years the Lady Anne was the mother of three children, Richmond was the father of twice as many more, conceived and born as carelessly as the puppies had been conceived and born in the late King's apartments.

And three years later, while Louise was preparing to leave the Court and go down to her estate at Aubigny, word came that James, having accomplished that for which he had been destined, had been forced to flee from his Kingdom.

The world had tumbled about Louise's ears. Money, that had been her chief concern since she landed in France, now became an obsession. She was filled with alarm that the pension she had received from Charles and, irregularly, from James might now cease altogether. In a state of panic she wrote to Orange, begging his continued support and that she might be allowed to visit his Kingdom and collect what was due to her.

But the answer brought no comfort. Dutch William, mindful of the part she had played for Louis, sent word back that the pension would be discontinued and that she could not be allowed to land in England.

The ladies at Versailles twittered with delight. Those who had been jealous of her had now no longer the reason to be jealous. Those who had wanted to compass her downfall now saw that downfall brought about through no aid of theirs.

Louise was in despair ; and when, a month later, word came that her father had died, it was as though another of the stable things in her life had fallen.

Desperately, her creditors crowding round her, she appealed to Louis ; but all he would grant her was a small pension totally inadequate for her needs. Richmond, who had, on the death of his grandfather, appeared in Paris, rushed back to England ; only to hear that Louise's palace had been burnt to the ground.

Defeated, hated by all the French Court, gossiped over by jealous women, her pensions stopped, her treasures burnt and only the small allowance allowed her by Louis continuing, Louise made ready to depart for Aubigny. There was nothing else she could do. Though men crowded round, paying her court, proud to be associated with one who had been a King's mistress, she would have none of them. She had loved and she had loved well and, in the end, she had lost. But, if she had lost, if, in the end, nothing remained to her save a country estate that she had rarely visited, the memory did remain and the memory was too precious to be smirched and sullied by the appearance of others.

So she turned them all down and made her preparations. Charles Stuart had won again and Louise, who had been constant while he lived, was to be constant now that he was dead.

She went to Aubigny, her creditors following her. She appealed to Louis who, one by one, bought them off ; and then, when they assembled in too

great numbers, published an edict that they were not to apply to her for a year.

But, beyond the small pension, he would not give her money. She had served her purpose. She had worked for him and for France and had been paid by Charles while he, Louis, had been paying Charles ; and now that Charles was dead, he had no further need of her.

Alone, as she had been for so much of her life, alone as she had always been save for Charles and Minette and Sebastian, deserted by Henriette and Richmond, her father dead, and Louis with no further use for her, she went down to Aubigny.

It was autumn. The trees had put on their russets and golds. The cattle still lay in the pastures. The old castle was sadly in need of repair. It was autumn and, though she had nearly fifty years more of life, it was autumn for her : because all that life had been was over for her, had died for her in that room in Whitehall, had faded and left only a ghost.

She set herself to her work at the castle. She appointed a steward, keeping to herself the oversight of all that was done there. She bargained and prevaricated and, in the end, did her best to pay her creditors, while the world forgot her or, when it remembered, insulted her . . . while William and Mary were succeeded by Anne, whom Louise had married to Prince George of Denmark, but who had long ago forgotten the Duchess of Portsmouth.

They forgot her too in Versailles. Her pension grew smaller and was irregularly paid and she was forced to apply for money again and again. When Louis died, she applied to the Regent. Promises were made, but the promises were soon forgotten as the woman at Aubigny had been forgotten. Away in England Richmond, worn out by dissipation, died and she did not hear of it till three months afterwards. In Paris Henriette, sitting at a window,

overlooking her orchard, made her will and died also : and James died at St. Germain, having waited for so long to be recalled to England.

But these things were away from Louise now. She had no time to worry over them. Affairs of State were finished and her life was bounded by the lands of Aubigny and the old eternal life of the soil ; the sowing and the reaping and the ingathering of the crops and the lowing of cattle and the deer that browsed in the park and the dogs that she had about her, as Charles had had dogs ; and the music that was played to her as music had been played to Charles ; and the old, old memories . . . Charles and Sebastian and Minette, as though they were all part of a theme song, something that had pursued her through life and that, in death, would not desert her.

She went to England once more. She attended at the Court of George I and was received by Charlotte, the Princess of Wales ; and sat at the same card table with the Countess of Dorchester who had been mistress to James, and the Countess of Orkney, who had been mistress to William, and they laughed together and Lady Dorchester said : " Lord, who would have thought to see we three whores together," and they laughed again.

But Louise did not laugh ; because it was all some part of a picture into which she no longer fitted, she who had been more beautiful and more gifted than any of the others.

Sometimes men came to Aubigny to see her. Her fame kept alive, a flickering candle in a wide world ; and old Voltaire came, spilling snuff and asking questions and telling the world that she was " old, weary and worn-out, but more beautiful than any young woman."

But she did not care much for these people. She had her own world now, a world more real

than that of the Court, than that of Lady Dorchester and Lady Orkney with their vulgarity, than that of Voltaire with his wit and his biting tongue, than the petty scandals and triumphs of Versailles.

She had her own world and on her own estate, when for a little she was free of financial worries, she built a nunnery and prayed in the chapel and visited the sick and aged and yearly visited each of her tenants, while the world outside continued making history, unaware or forgetful that, at Aubigny, a woman lived who had become a part of history, who had entered history at the same moment as had Charles Stuart of England, though, while Charles was dead, she still continued to live.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SHE was eighty-five. For years she had not left Aubigny, where her peasantry had come to look to her in all their troubles, where she had established a school on her estate and had engaged a schoolmaster and had herself gone down to the school and instructed the children in the true religion. There had been talk about that, as there had been talk about so much that Louise had done in her life. Men and women had grumbled that she should teach their children when her own life had been so irregular and she had never yet made any repentance or reparation.

But she had refused to do that. She had nothing for which she needed repentance. She had served her masters, Louis of France and Charles of England, each of them faithfully, each honourably, while she was with them ; for she had loved France and hated England ; and loved Charles and been indifferent to Louis. And, on that account, because there were equal measures in each side of the scales, she had not been torn in her allegiance. She had served each faithfully. She had worked for each to the best of her ability ; and, if she had been a king's mistress, she had loved the King and through herself, in the end, in the sending of Huddleston, she had saved the King.

She had grown very gentle with the years. She had grown very patient and the children " had no

fear of her, as they had of other ladies ; for she was always humble with them."

She had visited the sick while they forgot her in Whitehall and Versailles and only her own tenants blessed her.

She sat now at the window of her apartments in Paris looking over the Seine, hearing the cries of the boatmen, as she had heard them when she had been with Charles on the Thames ; hearing also the echo of horses' feet as they cantered over the cobbles.

She had come to Paris a month earlier, travelling in October along much of the same road that she had travelled with Sebastian nearly seventy years earlier, when the world had been yet unexplored, and the hearts of men unknown ; and there had been excitement and pleasure in the sight of a tame, blind bear as they came to the gates of Paris. But, had there been a bear now, she could not have seen it, seeing only a faint blur, as so much of the past was becoming a faint blur, gradually retreating from her, so that her only real contact with the world of late had been the troubles she had been forced to undergo from those of her creditors who still pursued her.

She sat at the window, hearing the sounds of the city, while the servants brought in the physicians and withdrew and left her to explain about the pain in her side, and listen to their suggestions and hear them debate as to which of their horrid remedies they might attempt.

But she stopped them then. "Very gently," she forbade them to bleed her, asking them if they thought that, at her age, she had much blood to spare. "You should have come sooner," she said, remembering the fire and the passion of youth.

They argued with her, In the age-old foolishness of men they lied to her, telling her that she was not

really old yet ; that she would soon be well again and that the pain in her side would soon give way to their treatment.

But she would not listen to them, a part of her old imperiousness remaining to her, the overwhelming will before which the English had retreated, Sunderland and Danby and black-hearted Russell.

She would have nothing done. She would be left alone.

They withdrew. The servants appeared again, begging her, for their sakes, to let the physicians heal her. But she refused, smiling at them, telling them that, for their own sakes, they need not worry, as she had made good provision for them.

They brought her food and drink ; but she would touch neither ; and the sounds from the river and the street grew less insistent and her ears began to fail her ; and she sent for her confessor.

He came, an old man who had been with her at Aubigny, but who, old as he was, had been only a boy in a village school when Louise had been governing England.

With him there she made "a most perfect confession" and was absolved and received the Sacrament and gave instructions about her property ; and charged her servants that, after she was dead, they should not desert her, but should keep her apartments clean and in good repair and should live there till it served them to depart and they had found new homes for themselves.

They listened. Foolishly and pathetically, they tried again to argue with her, telling her that soon she would be recovered. But Louise took no notice ; and, after she had given her instructions, she sent them away and was alone in the darkening shadows, while the cries of the boatmen ascended



W. Wissing

CATHERINE OF BRAGANZA

to her and she heard the rattle of horses' feet and the bells of Paris called out the quarters, and the hours and life, that she had loved, slipped away from her.

But life had already slipped away, for the world that she had known had been dead many years ; the world of Charles Stuart, who had fooled Louis ; of Nell and Buckingham and dear, mad Rochester, who had insulted her, but whom she had forgiven ; and pompous old Colbert and lovely Hortense and the little frightened Queen.

That world had died and they spoke a new language in Whitehall and the laughter that Charles had brought to England, as his gift to England, had been lost and smothered by the dullness of James and the heavy German grunts of the first Hanoverians. And Versailles had altered . . . and only men and women remained the same, men and women with their ambitions and desires, their loves and hates, their jealousies and smallnesses and their amazing heroisms. . . . Only men and women remained the same.

The city slept and sometime in the night, perhaps while she was dreaming of Bowman's lovely voice singing, perhaps while she heard again in sleep the yapping of Charles's dogs ; perhaps while she listened to the shouting and the raving of those who had come to Whitehall to demand her removal ; perhaps while she heard again Charles's voice calling her dear names or old Huddlestone blessing her as he kissed her hand when she left England or Nell mocking her or the false promises of James . . . perhaps while one of these sounds from the past was with her, she slipped out of life without fuss or ceremony as, without fuss or ceremony, she had entered it.

She slipped out of life as an unwanted guest, as someone who is suddenly aware that she has

overstayed her welcome and that, all her friends gone, she must hurry after them.

She faded out of life as, so long ago, she had faded out of history, while those at Whitehall and Versailles never noticed her going, because they were far too busy over their own affairs, building their own lives, making their own history and the history of their times as, in the past, Louise had made history.

She remained all night in her chair by the window. Versailles and Whitehall slept or went about their affairs of State or of scandal or of love and woke again. . . . And the servants of Louise woke and went to her room and, finding her dead, laid their hands on whatever they could, and fled.

But presently the poor monks from the Church of the Barefooted Carmelites, mindful that she had done them many services, came for her body and carried it away.

LETTERS

ONLY nineteen of Louise's letters survive : and of these one of them comes to us at second hand in the *Diary of Henry Sidney*.

All of the letters were written in those years after she had left England, when she had returned to a France that did not particularly want her and that did not show its gratitude for what she had done.

They are pathetic letters as the end of her life was pathetic. They are, all of them, requests for money : wishes that her pension should be paid : pleadings that some pity will be taken on her unhappy state.

The other letters, those which she must have written when she was in England, have been destroyed, probably purposely on account of what they contained.

But the begging letters remain—ill-spelt, ill-written and ill-punctuated from an age when, though spelling was irregular, the writing of letters had become a fine art. They remain with the suit of clothes in the British Museum, the only direct contact we have with her.

Even her enemies, those who had hated her, could not have wished that her spirit would be more humbled than it must have been in the writing of these letters.

FRAGMENT OF LETTER

SIGNED BY LOUISE, DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

Je vous prie d'accepter de la
 part de la duchesse de
 ma dévotion me fait toujours avec une
 vive commiseration pour la malheureuse
 et sur ce je prie Dieu
 que vous soyez en bonne santé.

This original autograph letter is preserved in the French National Archives, (G^{re} Comptable général des finances).
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LETTER I

To Henry Sidney.

Letter published in the *Diary of Henry Sidney*,
Vol. II, p. 307.

PARIS,

8 mars, 1689.

Je sais toutes les bontés avec lesquelles vous avez parlé de moi, Monsieur, dont je vous suis infiniment obligée. Vous savez combien toute ma vie j'ai été dans vos intérêts de vous et de vos amis. De mon côté je ne suis point changée, et l'on ne peut prendre plus de part à tout ce qui vous regarde que je fais. Que mon absence ne me nuise donc non plus auprès de vous, et veuillez, en ce qui dependra de vous, de bon foi protéger mes intérêts. Vous savez qu'ils sont si attachés à ceux du duc de Richmond que l'on ne les peut séparer. Je ne doute point que le souvenir que vous avez de qu'il à l'honneur d'être fils, ne vous porte d'avantage à nous continuer votre amitié que je souhaite très fort et pour l'un et pour l'autre. Vous voulez bien que je vous supplie d'avoir un peu de bonté pour M. Hornby qui est celui que vous rendra, cette lettre. Il est tout à fait dans mes intérêts et de mes amis. Ce me seroit un grand plaisir si je pouvois autant compter sur vous. Il est sûr, mon cher oncle, que vous ne pouvez j'amaïs être des amis de qui que ce soit plus des vôtres, ni qui vous honore plus parfaitement que,

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER I

I know all the goodness with which, Monsieur, you have spoken of me, and for which I am infinitely

obliged to you. You know how all my life I have been devoted to your interests, both yours and those of your friends.

For my part, I have in no wise altered, and no one could do more in all which concerns you than I do. May my absence, therefore, do me no harm in regard to you, and let us hope that in so far as it depends on you, you will protect my interests in good faith. You know that they are so linked with those of the Duke of Richmond that one cannot separate them. I do not doubt that the remembrance you have that he is my son, will prevent you from continuing any longer that friendship, which I hope to be still very strong for each of us. You know very well that I entreat you to have a little kindness for M. Hornby, which is he who shall bring you this letter. He is heart and soul for my interests and those of my friends. It is certain, my dear Uncle, that you cannot have friends who are more truly yours nor who honour you more perfectly than

LOUISE, DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER II

To the Comte de Pontchartrain.

Original Autograph in French National Archives,
G, 7.

PARIS,

ce 4 octobre 1692.

L'extresme misère dais abistans et dais paysant a l'autour d'Aubignie, qui est ma duché, me fait, Monsieur, avec instance vous conjurer d'avoyr pitié du malheureux estat ou il sont reduyt, tams par la grande charge de taille et des ustensille qu'ils ont tous les ans, que par le malheur qu'ils ont eu d'une grellé qui les a tous grellé st'anne. Ils sont sy

accable et sy peu annestat de payer qu'ils abandonnent et la ville et la taire. C'est ce qui fait, Monsieur, que j'ose vous conjurer par pitié d'an avoyr pour eux, et de vouloyr mander a Monsieur Cerancour, intendant de Bourge, de les vouloir exsenter de jens de guerre St'Anné et de vouloyr leur diminuer la taille, estent apsollumant une taire ruynée, sy vous n'avés ste bontés-la pour moy. Monsieur, ne me la refuse pas, estent une vrais charisté, et la misère y estent au dellas de ce que vous poves vous ymager. Pardonés moy mais frequantes importunistés, vous m'aves permis de conter sur vos bontés essentiellement, ainsy, Monsieur, ge m'adresse à vous avec confiance.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER II

The utter misery of the inhabitants and the peasants around d'Aubigne, which is my Duchy, makes me, Sir, ask you with all my power, to have pity on the unfortunate state to which they have been reduced, both by the heavy tax on land and on their tools which they have to pay every year, and by the misfortunes they have had by reason of heavy hail-storms which has literally stunned them. They are so overcome, and so little able to pay that they are leaving the towns and the country-side. Therefore, Sire, I dare to ask you, out of pity to have mercy on them, and to deign to ask of Monsieur Cerancour, Intendant of Bourges, to have them exempted, especially the people of the war of St. Anne, and to have these taxes diminished. The fields being absolutely ruined.

Monsieur, don't refuse it to me, it will be a real charity, the poverty being above what you could imagine. Forgive my frequent importunities : you

have permitted me to count essentially on your goodness. Thus, Monsieur, I address myself to you with confidence.

L. DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER III

To Chamillart.

Original Autograph British Museum Additional
MSS. 18675 fo74.

DE PARIS,

ce 2 d'avril 1701.

Sachant et connessant, Monsieur, lais anbarras d'affaire que vous avez, je n'é ossé tous les tems cy vous trop presser et vous conjurer de vouloyr pancer à moy comme vous m'avés fait la grasse de me le promestre. O nom de dieu, Monsieur, ayés assés de bonté pour moy et de pitié pour ma triste circonstance pour vouloyr m'accorder le payeumant dais quinsse mille franc que vous m'avés dist que le Roy ordonest que je touchasse a pressant, et accordés moy l'expédission de mon arrest pour le surplus ; que je me flate, Monsieur, que vous ne me fères le tord de mettre cy bas mais interais que Monsieur Pelltier les a réduyts ; que je vous aye donc la sansible obligasson, Monsieur, que je ne perde point moytié par moytié, de considérer qu'estens sur les estats que je seré encore bien du tems sans toucher mon argent. Ainsi, Monsieur, ayés l'umanisté d'antrer dans mon malheureux estat et que la liquidasson que vous voules bien avoyr la bonté de faire soyt en ma faveur et la plus avantageusse qu'il vous sera possible ; car de votre bonté an sesy despand tous les bonheur et l'arengement de mes affaire ; je chargé mon homme d'affaire d'avoyr l'honneur de vous présenter sette lestre. Vous orés la bonte de luy ordonner lais pas

que vous treveres bien que je fasse auprais de vous pour la terminesson de cette affaire ycy ; donnes luy donc, s'il vous plect, vous ordres avec autems de bonté que vous m'avés permis d'espérer que vous oriés pour moy. J'ossé vous an conjurer tres-instammant, Monsieur, et de vouloyr bien croire que vous n'an pouvés avoyr pour personne qui estoyt plus vesristable ny qui vous estime et honnore cy parfaitement que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER III

Knowing, Monsieur, the immense amount of business which you have I have not dared all this time when you were so engaged to hurry you, and beg you to endeavour to think of me as you have made me the grace to promise me. In God's name, Monsieur, have sufficient kindness for my sad circumstances to send me the payment of fifteen thousand francs which you told me the King had commanded I should receive now. And grant me patience in my waiting for the remainder, that I may flatter myself, Monsieur, that you would not wish to do me the wrong of putting my interests so low as Monsieur Pelltier has reduced them. That I may have towards you the visible obligation in that I shall not lose piece by piece, and of considering in regard to my position, that I shall be still for some time unable to handle my money. Have then, Monsieur, the kindness to look into my unhappy state, and that the relief which you intend to be so good as to make in my favour may be the most advantageous possible. For on your bounty depends all the happiness and the arrangements of my affairs ; I shall charge my man of business to have the honour of presenting this letter to you. You will have the kindness to command him con-

cerning the steps which you find best that I shall make concerning the termination of this matter here ; Give him then, if it please you, your orders with as much kindness as you have permitted me to hope that you have for me. I dare beg of you to deal urgently with it, and to believe in truth that there is no person who possesses more esteem, and who honours you more perfectly than myself.

LOUISE, DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER IV

To Chamillart.

French National Archives, G, 7.

DE PARIS,

ce 5 daoust 1702.

Permettez moy, Monsieur, dossier encore vous demander une grasse qui est suellement de me vouloir faire mestre sur la feuille de distribution ; vous nan pesrez pa plus tot sy vous ne voulez, mais si vous me voulez bien faire ce plaisir la je treve le moien de macosmoder avec mes jens d'afaïre, sy vous me donnez cette marque de bonté. Ne me la refusé pas, Monsieur, je vous an conjuré, car par là vous me donnerez le moien de sortir davec dais arabe qui me tiranisse de toute maniere. Soufré donc, Monsieur, que je vous conjure de me donner ce secours et de vouloir bien vous donner la penne de me faire savoir sy vous orez ceste bonté pour moy. Je natems que sella, pour partir disy et finir et sortir absolument dafaïre, sy je suis assé heureuse pour que vous veuliez bien me donner ce secours que je vous demande instamment avec la justisse, Monsieur, de me croyre la personne de monde qui vous estime, ayme et l'honore le plus parfaïtement.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER IV

Permit me, Monsieur, to venture once more to ask of you a favour, which is simply to have me placed on the list of beneficiaries. Perhaps you will not be able to pay me as soon as you would wish, but if you will do me this kindness, I will find the means of arranging my affairs with my business people. Do not refuse, Monsieur, I entreat you, because by this means you will supply me with the assistance to remove myself from these usurers who are tyrannising over me in every way. Suffer therefore, Monsieur, that I may entreat you to give me this assistance, and be so good as to give yourself the trouble of letting me know if you can contrive this good for me. I am only waiting for this to get away from here, and to get completely out of this business if I am happy enough to have the assurance that you can give me the help which I ask urgently of you. And do me the justice, Monsieur, to believe me to be the person in all the world who esteems, loves and honours you most perfectly.

L. DUCHESSE OF PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER V

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 20 mars, 1708.

Ne pouvant avoyr l'honneur de vous voir, Monsieur, par le grand abattement qui me reste d'une violente fiesvrè et un etresipelle que jé en dans le taite et sur tout le visage, je prant le liberté de vous escrire sais lignes pour vous suplier de vouloir

bien vous resouvenir de la promesse que vous avez eu la bonté de me faire aupres de Monsieur Nicolle, qui anagist le plus mal du monde avec moy car, depuis castre moy, je nê pas pus parvenir a tirer un soult de luy pour ma subsistance. Il a ma belle tapisserie dont il se sert et qu'il gaste tout, et je me treve pis que je nettai avec Thevening, car aux moins me paye til régulliesrement tout lay moy ; mais tapisserie ne scrvoient poingt et estet fort soigneusement conservé ; je ne luy donne que huit pour cent, jendonne dix à celluy-cy, il touche mon revenu et il ne me payen poingt et me lesse manquer de tout ; cnfin s'yl ne luy parest pas que vous macordye une forte protection, je n'en vienderé jamais about. Ne me la refussé pas, Monsieur, je vous ansupli, et donnez vous la penne de luy parller comme luy manquant voullant estre oberys. Josse espèrer cet ésantial servisse de vous, Monsieur, et que vous serez persuadé que personne dans le monde ne vous peut estimer et honorer sy parfaitement que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER V

Not being able to have the honour of seeing you, Monsieur, by reason of the great weakness which has been left with me after a violent attack of fever, and an eruption which I have on my head and on my face, I take the liberty of writing you a few lines to ask you to remember the promise which you had the goodness to make me through M. Nichollas, who is behaving in the worst manner possible towards me. For four months I have not been able to get a sou from him for my living. He has my beautiful tapestry, which he is using and completely spoiling, and I find it worse than when

Thevenay had it, for at least he paid me regularly every month, and the tapestry was not in use and was very carefully preserved. I only used to give him 5 per cent, but to this one I have to give 8 per cent : he touches my income and pays me nothing, and leaves me without anything at all. Finally if he does not feel that you are really giving me a strong protection, I shall never get to the end of it. Do not refuse me, Monsieur, I entreat you to give yourself the trouble of speaking to him, so that he will not dare to disobey you. I venture to hope for that essential service from you, Monsieur, and that you will be persuaded that no one in the world can so perfectly honour and esteem you as I.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER VI

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 12 avril, 1708.

Ma santé ne me permettant pas encore d'aller à Versailles Monsieur, je vous envoy le secure Pinson pour vous porter un memoyre ; il vous expliquera, sy vous vouldes bien macarder le plésir de luy donner un mosmant dodyane, la conséquence de ce most de macorder la grasse que je vous demande ; je lieux de me flater de vos bontes et d'esperer de vous tous lais secours qui sont a vostre pouvoyr selluy cy est antiesremant, accordelle my donc, Monsieur, je vous an conjure, la pronte expédition mest importante, et vous le connesterez parce qu'il aura l'honneur de vous dire. Josse espérer que vous macorderez cette marque de l'interait que vous me foite l'honneur de prendre an moy comme

à la personne du monde qui sertennement vous honore, ayme et estime la plus parfaitement.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER VI

My health does not permit me yet to come to Versailles, Monsieur, therefore I send you the trustworthy Pinson to bring you a note. He will explain to you if you will give me the pleasure of granting to him the honour of a brief audience. The result of this should be to accord to me the grace which I ask of you. I trust to be able to count on your kindness and to hope to obtain from you all that assistance which lies in your power. Grant me therefore, Monsicur, the quickest expedition over this matter. You will know all about it because he will have the honour of telling it to you. I dare to hope that you will grant me that mark of your interest, which does me the honour of making me the person in the whole world who certainly honours, loves and esteems you most perfectly.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER VII

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 9 juillet, 1708.

Comme vour m'avez permis de conter sur vos bontés, Monsieur, j'osse prandre la liberté de les implorer non an chose qui vous peuvent estre a charge, car sait ce que jé visteré toujours, mais

comme vous mavez fait l'honneur de me dire dans le cosmancement que vous avez esté controlleur général, que vous ne trouvesriez pas mavais que je vous presentasse autems dafaïre que on man donnerest qui parsissant rësonnable, je mosse flater que vous avez asses de bontés pour moy pour aymer autems et j'espère mieux me faire du bien de cette maniere cà des personnes indispërente ; vous connaisse mais besoins et la malheureux estat ou je suis et de quelle consëquence me peut estre un secour comme selluy sy qui ne fait tort a personne et qui notte rien des coffre du Roy ; ne me reffusé donc poingt vostre protection. Vous m'avriez paru sy rempli de bonté, d'amitié et de bonne vollonté pour moy devant destre dans le poste, que josse me promestre ; Monsieur, que dans dais chose comme celly-cy vous me voudrez bien procurer tous les secours à ma môresse situassion qui despenderont de vous. Vous vouldes donc bien me permettre de vous, faire souvenir par ce mémoyre, que je joint a ma lettre, des deux affaires que jus l'honneur de vous présenter la surveillance de vostre despart. La personne qui a l'honneur de vous présanter ma lettre est le Sieur de Longchant qui me les a donné et qui est un homme fort industrieux dans sait chosse la ; anfin, Monsieur, josse espérer que je trèvesre an vous dans dais chose qui ne vous seront pas plus anbarassante ny plus disficille que selle-sy une vraie protection et un veristable et essantielle ami, et que vous me fere la justisse destre fortement persuadé que personne ne vous ayme, ne vous estime et honore sy parfaitement que je fais véritablement.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Permettez moi de vous suplier de vous souvenir de me faire mestre sur l'estat de distribussion pour ma pansion eschue depuis le commencement de juin.

LETTER VII

As you permitted me to count on your kindness, Monsieur, I dare to take the liberty of imploring it, not for things which would be at your expense, for I would only aspire to that, but as you have done me the honour of saying in the beginning when you were made Controller General, that you would not take it amiss if I introduced to you any business which seemed to have a reasonable prospect, I flatter myself that you have sufficient kindness for me to mean this, and I trust to do myself more good in this manner than by dealing with indifferent persons. You know my necessities, and the unfortunate condition in which I find myself, and of what consequence such help could be, which harms nobody, and which takes nothing out of the King's purse. Do not refuse me this help. You have appeared to me to be so full of kindness and of friendship, of good will towards me, before entering in this position, that I have ventured to promise to myself, Monsieur, that in these things as in those, you would procure for me all the assistance in my wretched state which you could arrange. You will therefore permit me to recall this by this memorandum which I add to my letter, of the two matters which I had the honour to present to you on the eve of your departure.

The man who has the honour of presenting this letter is the Sieur de Longchaut, who has put them into my hands, and who is very talented and industrious in these affairs. Finally, Monsieur, I venture to hope that I shall find in you in these matters a thing which shall not be either more embarrassing or more difficult than that of providing a real protection, and a true and veritable friend, and that you will do me the justice of

believing that no one can love honour and esteem you so perfectly as I do.

LOUISE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Permit me to entreat of you to remember to put me on the list of beneficiaries for my pension which is due since the beginning of June.

LETTER VIII

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

ce 18 juillet 1708.

J'osse espérer, Monsieur, que la grasse que vous avez bien voullu accorder à monsieur le Marquis de Thoye *an parllant au sieur Volland pour luy, ne seras pas retraits par vous comme Monsieur le Marquis de Vallance ce le promest et qu'il la fait entendre au sieur Volland an luy demandant six ou sept jour* pour an ployer sait sollicitasson aupres de vous. Je me flatte, Monsieur, quelle norant nulle lieux et que vous orez la bonté de vous continuer vostre protection, Monsieur de Thoye ayant toute lais suretés à donner au Sieur Volland. Ne me refusez donc poingt ceste marque de bonté et de consideration que josse vous dire, Monsieur, que je meriste pas lais santiments d'amitiés et destime que je jour vous comme pour un des plus honneste homme du monde, et qui a le plus de merité et que j'onnore le plus parfaitement.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Permettez moy ancote, Monsieur, d'osser vous suplier de vous volloyr souvenir de moy pour ma pension qui est eschue depuis le cosmancement du moy passé.

LETTER VIII

I dare to hope, Monsieur, that the boon which you have graciously accorded to Monsieur le Marquis de Thoye, in speaking to Sieur de Volland for him, will not be withdrawn by you as M. le Marquis de Vallence promises and which he has made the Sieur Volland understand in asking him six or seven days to employ his solicitation with you. I flatter myself, Monsieur, that nothing of this kind will happen, and that you will have the goodness to continue your protection towards M. de Thoye, having all the guarantees to give to Sieur Volland. Do not refuse me this mark of kindness and of consideration which I make so bold to say, Monsieur, I merit by reason of the sentiments of friendship and esteem which I hold for you as one of the most honest men in the whole world, who has the most virtue and whom I honour the most completely. LOUISE, DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Permit me once more, Monsieur, to dare to plead with you that you may keep my pension in mind, which has been in arrears since the beginning of the last month.

LETTER IX

To Desmarests.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 8 d'aoust 1708.

Le maniestre obliquente avec laquelle vous me fiste la grasse, Monsieur, dantrer dans mes intereis quant jus l'honneur de vous parler de ceste grande affaire des billicy de monoye manhardy de vous importuner de sais ligne-sy, pour vous représenter quelle doyt parestre a un homme aussy esclere que

vous, sy avantajeuse pour le servisse du Roy quelle meriste que vous y donniez toute vostre atantion, afin de la conclure insemment et que ceux qui l'entrepennent puisse travailler a s'arenger la dessus. Ainsy j'espere, Monsieur, que voue leur manderez insemment de vous aller trever a Fonteneblaux. Monsieur Nicollas man a entretenue a fond et dans mon heux de jugement, je treve qui la possede sy bien que rien ne peut manquer de leur part a l'execution. Il m'a evenemens et qu'il ne craing auqun incouvenient pour vous ny pour eux. Je ne voye an luy qu'un tres grande selle pour vostre service et une franchise qui lobligerest d'abandonner lafaire syl nestet persuade que vous y orez de grands avantages a baucoup donneur de dans et dehor du royaume et cy je nestais pas persuade je ne prendrais pas, Monsieur, cette liberte sertenement personne ne s'interessant plus vivement autres que moy, sait ce qui me parte a vous marquer qu'il faudra ce vous maudrez Monsieur Nicolla et un associe et puis rettenir Nicolla tant seul pour vous instruyre a feu et vous mestre un estate tante lafaire pour le conclure ; fe de nouveaux de luy sa parole qu'il fera pour moy tout au monde ce que vous voudrez mais ne croyez pas s'il vous plect, Monsieur, que sy je nanvissa j'est pas la chose glorieuse et utile pour vous, que l'interais que il peux avoyr me fit vous représenter la chose sy vivement, ne trevez donc poingt movais, Monsieur, la liberte que je prend et soyez persuade de mon attachment et de ma saingsere amitie pour vous, personne ne pouvant vais considerer avec une plus parfaite-estime et vous honorer plus infinissment que je le fais.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Trevez bon que je vous supli aussy de vous resauvenir de ma pansion et d'ardonner que je soye paye.

LETTER IX

The striking manner with which you do me the honour, Sire, to enter into my interests, when I have the honour to speak with you about that pressing affair of finances, emboldens me to importune you about it, and to point out, what must be apparent to so clear-sighted a man as yourself, how advantageous for the service of the King it is that it merits that you should give it all your attention. In order to conclude it immediately, and in order that those who undertake it may set to work to arrange matters, I trust, Monsieur, that you will order them instantly to go and find you at Fontainebleau. Monsieur Nicollas has explained the business to its very foundations, and, in my sober judgment, I find it to be so good that nothing ought to be left undone on their part for its execution. In the issue he does not fear any difficulties either for you or for them. I can only find in him a real zeal for your service and a frankness which will oblige him to abandon the enterprise if he is not persuaded that you will derive great advantages both within and without the kingdom, and if I was not persuaded of this, I could not take, Monsieur, this liberty. Certainly no one is more intensely interested than I myself, which leads me to observe to you that you must reprove M. Nicolla and his partner, and then keep Nicolla alone, so that he can instruct you a little, and put you in a state such that you can finish it yourself. Get from him again his word that he will do for me everything in the world that you desire, but please you, Monsieur, do not believe that if I take precautions it is the thing which is glorious and useful for you, which interests me, and for that I have put forward the matter in so lively a manner, therefore do not think ill of me, Monsieur, for the

liberty which I take, and be persuaded of my attachment, and of my sincere friendship for you. No one could consider you with a higher esteem and honour you more infinitely than I do.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Please do not think harshly of me that I beg you also to remember my pension, and to order that I am paid.

LETTER X

To Desmarets.

National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ec 14 aoust 1708.

Je resoy, Monsieur, dans le mosmant le lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur m'escire; je charge Monsieur Nicolla d'avoyr l'honneur de vous rendre celle ycy qui san retourne a Fontenneblaux pour attendre vos hordre contems et croyant estre sur et an estat de lever toute lais difficultes que vous pouvez treve dans stafaïre, sy vous voulez bien luy faire la grasse de luy an parler. Ne refusez pas je vous pris la liberte que j'osse prandre dantrer dans stafaïre comme presumant de vous exsiter et persuader contre vostre propre jugement et vos grandes lumieres ny maimé par un esprit davis diste et d'interais desresonable car je ne la sonette quanteins quelle vous pouras estre agreable et utile. Au ce cas la jean resantire un sansible plesir puis que vous pourez estre mon bien faiteur sans qu'il vous an coute rien dauqune maniere que quelque parolle. Ainsy quant josse vous suplier de voullour apro fondir la chosse avec le sieur Nicollas, se n'est que pour que vous an ayez un parfait escleratissement et lesprit satisfait la dessus pour vous determiner comme vous le jugerez le

plus apropos. Il serest reste pour atandre vos hordres et vostre tems sans qu'il avest ysy eune a faire de consequence. Aujourdhuy je vous suis infiniment oblige, Monsieur, de la bonte que vous me faite espere que vous hordonnerez le payement de ma pansion ; soyez persuade je vous suplie de mon parfait atachment pour vous et que personne ne se peut interesser avec plus amitie a tousse qui vous regarde, ny vous estimer et honorer plus parfaitement que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER X

I have just received, Monsicur, the letter which you have done me the honour of writing to me. I command Monsicur Nicolla to have the honour to send you this one, as he returns to Fontainebleau to await your orders, and thinking to be sure, and to be able to overcome all the difficulties which you can find in the business. If you will only do him the honour of speaking to him. Do not refuse, I beg of you, the liberty which I dare to take by entering upon this affair, as presuming to excite you and to persuade you against your own judgment and your great inspirations, and even with a spirit of miserliness and unrcasonable interest, because I consider in what mannecr it can be rendered agreeable and useful for you. In this case the people will resent an obvious pleasure, because you will be able to be my benefactor without it costing you anything save a word. So, when I dare to beseech you to wish to investigate this matter with the Sieur Nicollas, it is so that you may have a perfect understanding, and a settled mind over the business, in order to determine what you consider the best. He will remain to hear your orders, and your time is his, unless he has something of importance.

To-day I am infinitely obliged to you, Sir, for the kindness which you have done me in giving me hope that you will order the payment of my pension: be persuaded that I beg you from my perfect attachment for you, and that no one can interest himself with more friendship in all which concerns you nor esteem and honour you more perfectly than I. L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XI

To Desmarests

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 16 octobre, 1708.

Je viens d'apandre, Monsieur, que quelque hun de messieurs les intendant de fisnace avest ontrepris doptenir de vous pour un ostre compaigny que celle de Monsieur Vollant et sais assossies dont vous trevesrez les noms sy joings, lafaire de la tribustion de la noblesse. Josse espérer, Monsieur, que vous n'avez pas oublier que je vous la propossé sainc ou six jours aprais que vous fuste nommé controlleur général et que vous me fiste l'honneur de m'assurer que vous ne le feriez que pour moi et vous la renvoyatte a Monsieur Couturier que vous an avez chargé pour vous an faire souvenir. Sait un bien que vous me ferez, Monsieur, et dont je mosse flater que vous aymerez mieux que je profite que quelques amis de messieurs lais intendant de fisnace. Comme vous mavez fait la grasse de me donner vostre parolle, je suis persuadé que vous orez la bonté de me la tenir et de vouloyr préférer la compaigny du Sieur Vollant à tout offre et de leur permettre de vous faire leut soumission. L'extresme craincte, Monsieur, de vous importuner a fait que je né pas, ossé trop souvent vous an

parlier pour an refrécher la mé moyre non plus que de l'afaire de la banque, mourant toujours de peur de vous estre trop incosmode : cependant, Monsieur, se sont lais plesir et dais grasse qu'il faut que vous fassiez a quelquun ; vous savez la cruelle situation de mais afaire, par sais deux que jè en l'honneur de vous proposer vous me proquerez un repaux esternel et vous devennez sertennement mon bien faiteur et hor destat de vous devoyr à la venir trop importuner. Accordez moy donc, Monsieur, sais deux grasse et ansella une marque de vos bontés et de vostre amitié et de vouloyr bien me faire savoir le tems a peu prais que vous trevesrez a propos de les fisnir pour que je prenne. Jais mesure nécessaire pour la suretté de ce que les uns et les ostres mont ofert tant pour la faire de la banque que pour selle de la noblesse : je natems que vostre dessision pour manaller à une campagne, mettent de conséquence de ne poingt quiter que je nay eu mais sûretés pour proficter du bien et de lavantage que josse esperer que vous voudrez bien me foire et me proquer dont je vous orez une esternelle obligassion, car, Monsieur, sertennement vous me ferez jamais de plésir ny de bien à personne qui lais ressante. Avec une plus parfaite reconesance ny qui vous estime, ayme vesristablement, Monsieur, et honore plus porfaitement que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XI

I have just learnt, Monsieur, that some of the gentlemen of the Intendante de Fissance have endeavoured to obtain from you for another company than that of Monsieur Vollant and his partners of whose names you will find a list appended, the making of the sale of the titles of nobility. I trust, Monsieur, that you have not forgotten that I proposed,

five or six days after you were appointed Contrôller general, and that you did me the honour of assuring me that you would do it only for me, and that you sent it back to M. Couturier charging him to keep you reminded of it. Let it be a good thing which you do for me, Monsieur, and I ought to be able to flatter myself that you would like it better that I should profit rather than some friends of Messieurs the Intendants of Finance.

As you have accorded to me the boon of giving me your word of honour, I feel persuaded that you will afford me the goodness of supporting me, and that you wish to prefer the company of Sieur Vollant to any other, and to permit them to make their submission to you. The extreme fear, Monsieur, of troubling you has had the effect that I did not dare to speak to you too often and to refresh your memory about the matter of the Bank for fear of inconveniencing you too greatly. Yet, Monsieur, these are the pleasures and the bounties which it is necessary you should make to someone. You know the cruel situation of my affairs, by these two which I have had the honour to suggest to you, you could grant me an eternal peace—and you will certainly become my benefactor, and free yourself from the condition in which you are obliged to listen to my importunities. Accord me, therefore, Monsieur, these boons so that I have thus a mark of your goodness and of your friendship. And be so kind as to let me know the time as nearly as is possible, when you will find it possible to conclude the matter, in order that I may take the steps necessary to ensure the safety of that which both have offered me, both in the matter of the bank and that of the nobility. I only wait for your decision to start the campaign, making it a condition not to leave it in order to take advantage of all the profit, that I may venture to hope that you wish

me well, and to procure me that which will lay me under an eternal obligation. For, Monsieur, you will certainly be doing a pleasure to one who truly feels it. With a more perfect gratitude no one can ever more perfectly love, esteem and honour than

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XII

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 25 janvier, 1709.

La bonté que vous avez en, Monsieur, de me promestre quan fessant *l'affaire concernant la noblesse dais huit cosmissere vous agreriez la compoignie que j'orais l'honneur de vous présanter*, dont le sieur Volland est à la taite et qui a esté travaillé par le sieur de la Combe, me fait esperer, Monsieur, que vous voudrez bien vous an souvenir, ce qui fait que je prand la liberté de vous importuner de sois ligne soit que je me suis lessé dire que Monsieur Poultier voullést vous an parler pour loptenir pour un autre compaigny ; mais jé tems de foy an vous, cas moings que ce ne soyt pas un oubli, je mosse assé flater de vostre amitié, pour me persuader que vous voudrez bien man continuer lais marque et ne rien changé que vous mavez foist l'honneur de me promettre. Je vous ansupli très instamment et vous demande la justisse, Monsieur, de croyre que personne ne peut avoyr plus de recosnenance et de sonsibillité de vos bontés ny ne vous peut estimer, considerer et honorer plus parfaitement que

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Je vous envoye si joingt, Monsieur, les noms de ce qui compose la compaigny : Rolland, Lantage, Oiseau, Vanelle, Le Vasseur, Coquet.

LETTER XII

The goodness you have had, Monsieur, in promising me that in making the business concerning the nobility of the eight (? cosmissere) you would agree to the company which I should have the honour of offering you, of which the Sieur Volland is at the head, and which has been created by the Sieur de la Campe, causes me to hope, Monsieur, that you would remember it well, which enables me to take the liberty of troubling you with these few lines, although it has been said to me that M. Poultier wishes to speak with you to obtain for another company but I have so much confidence in you, for unless this is not a forgetfulness, I dare to flatter myself sufficiently in your friendship that I can persuade myself that you would wish well to me and will continue your marks of sympathy, and will change nothing in what you have done me the honour to promise me. I beg you with all speed and will ask you to do me the justice of believing that no one can have more gratitude and sensibility concerning your goodness, nor can more highly esteem consider and honour you more perfectly than

LOUISE, DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

I send you herewith, Monsieur, the names of those who compose the company : Rolland, Lantage, Oiseau, Vanelle, Le Vasseur, Coquet.

LETTER XIII

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DE PARIS,

ce 24 juillet, 1709.

L'estat ou je me treve, Monsieur, me forsse a prandre la liberté de vous importuner de sois

lignes pour vous demander an grasse très instenmant de vouloyr bien mordonner le payement de ma pansion. Si vous trevez la disfisqulté de me faire donner quelque espesse qui me ferest pour tems fort grand plésir, au moings accordez moy la marque de protection et d'amitié de lordonner an billois de monoye. Ne me refusé pas, Monsieur, je vous suplis, ce secour essentiel : je natems que ceste marque de vostre considérassion et d'amitié pour partir pour la province. Josse, Monsieur, me flater que vostre bon cœur et vostre pitié pour moy vous portera à macorder mon insistente prière comme à la personne du monde qui y sera la plus sansible et quy vous ayme, estime et honore, Monsieuc, plus parfaitement que je ne le puis exprime.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Oserés je espèrer un mot de réponse de vous ?
Quelle soyt je vous conjure favorable.

LETTER XIII

The state in which I find myself, Monsieur, obliges me to take the liberty of importuning you by these lines, to ask of you a grace very urgently, which is to order the payment of my pension.

If you find some difficulty in giving me some hope which for the time would be a great pleasure, then at least give me the mark of your protection and friendship to order me a bank-note for money. Do not refuse me, Monsieur, I entreat you this essential assistance : I only wait for this mark of your consideration and friendship to go away into my province. I dare flatter myself that your good heart and your pity for me will lead you to yield to my insistent prayer, as to the person in the whole world who will be the most sensible of it, and who

loves, esteems and honours you more perfectly than I can express.

LOUISE DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

Dare I hope for a word in response to this? Whatever it may be, I hope for the best.

LETTER XIV

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DAUBIGNY,

ce 5 octobre, 1709.

Je ne sais, Monsieur, sy vous avez la bonté de remarquer par mon sillance la craingte que jé et que je vous ay toujour marquer de vous estre importune. Tems que jé pus, lé suyvis ansella mon goust et la veritable consideration que jé pour vous ; mais an Veristé, Monsieur, je me treve dans un sy rigoureux estat, que je me treve forcé d'implorer vostre secours et vostre amitié. Jestay venne isy contems dy trever quelque douseur et quelque essance ; mais la misère y est sy afreuse que l'on ne sorest tirer un souet car lon a pas seullement de coy acheter du graing poor semer et sy vous n'avez pitié de moy, mais taire ne seront pas ancemancé, car, sy je ne lais fait pas faire moy maime, lay fermer sont hors d'estat et cassy tous à la mandiscité ; trevez bon donc, Monsieur, que je supli instamment de me donner une marque de distinction et de bonté portiquilliesre, an me fessant l'ordonner le payeûmant de ma pansion, ce seras une obligossion esternelle que je vous orez, car je suis a non plus. Ne me refusé pas, Monsieur, je vous an supplie, et laissé vous toucher aux besoins d'une amie que vous honore autems que je fais. Trevez encore bon, Monsieur, de resovoyr un plesset de ma part qun homme à moy ora l'honneur

de vous presanter sur le sujet de mais boys. Ce plaset vous instruyra ; ayez, syl vous plect, atantion. Que jè treve donc, Monsieur, en vous un essentiel ami dans mes vrais besoins, j'osse me le promestre et mon flater et me vous sercz bien persuadé que personne ne peut estre avec une plus parfaite estime, Monsieur, vostre très umble et tres obéissante servant que je la suis.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XIV

I do not know, Monsieur, if you have the goodness to remark by my silence, the terror I have, for I am always afraid to be a trouble to you. As well as I can, I follow both my taste and the true consideration which I have for you, but in truth, Monsieur, I find myself in such a dolorous condition that I am obliged to implore your help and your friendship. I came here hoping to find some peace and some ease : but the poverty here is so frightful that one cannot get a sou out of it. There is not even money to buy the seed for sowing, and if you do not have pity on me the fields will not be sown, for if I do not do it myself, the farmers are out of their lands and they will all fall into beggary. Find it well then, Monsieur, that I supplicate you urgently to give me a proof of distinction and of especial goodness, in making an order for the payment of my pension. That will place me under an eternal obligation for I am at the end of everything. Do not refuse me, Monsieur, I beg of you, and let yourself be touched by the needs of a friend who honours you as I do. Find it good too, Monsieur, to receive a note from me which one of my people will have the honour to present to you on the subject of my forests. That letter will instruct you, pay it attention if you please. That

I may find in you, Monsieur, a real friend in my present necessity that I dare promise myself, and flatter myself that you will be persuaded that no one can be with a more perfect esteem, Monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant than

LOUISE DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XV

To Desmarests.

French National Archives, G, 7, 543.

DAUBIGNI,

ce 27 novembre, 1709.

J'us l'honneur, il ya deux mois, de vous faire présanter un plasset, Monsieur, par lequel je demandais qu'il vois plut ordonner que lais vente dais boys de mon duché Daubigny fussent remise a l'année prochenne dans l'esperance que j'avais quelle serest porté a un plus hault prisque stannée, et nayant poingt este statué sur ce plassait, lon a exéquisté laroit du conseil qui an hordonnait la vente. Lay boys furent vandus le sainc du present pour moy maimé fait informé, lon ma raporté qu'ils estet porté a leur juste valleur tems par raport a leur caslité ca leur situassion, estant esloigné de neuf lieux dais riviére. Cependant comme Monsieur Thiton grand mestre ma fait voyr lordre que vous luy avez envoyé le quinsse novambre pour la remise de l'adjudication, josse vous suplier de vouloyr bien luy ordonner qu'il nanpesche poingt l'adjudicataire de jouir puisque sait une chose conforme et que le retar me serest tres prejudissable : josse ancosre Monsieur, vous conjurer davoit pitié de ma triste situassion qui est plus rigoreuse que vous le pouvez vous l'imaginer. Je suis tres persuade que le Roy qui mignore pas depuis fort longtems mon malheureux estat qui si

vous aviez la bonté de le luy ny vous, ne pouvez pas trever aucun disrengemmant pour dix mille franc de plus on de moins dans lais afaire.

Dantant que sait la seulle grasse et le seul bienfait dont il mest jamais honoré et mayant fait l'honneur de masurer quant je pris la liberté de luy andemander dantre qu'il ne pouvst pas, mais qu'il me ferest payer régulliesrement et préfèrablement. On de dien, Monsieur, veillez antrcr avec un cœur umaing et tandre dans mon rigoureux besoing. Josse espérer cette marque de vostre amitié et de vostre bonté comme la justisse, Monsieur, destre persuadé que de toute lais personnes qui ont toujours fait profession destre de vos amis il ny en a auqune qui vous aime et honore aussy parfaitement que moy,

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XV

I had the honour, Monsieur, two months ago, to send you a message in which I asked of you that you should give orders that the sale of my woods, in my Duchy of Daubigny, should be postponed until the next year, for I had a hope that the price might rise during this year. Not having had any decision on this matter, they have carried out the decree of the Council which ordered the sale, and the woods were sold on the 5th of this month. I was informed of this, and they reported to me that the forests have been sold at their just value, both having regard to their quality and to their situation, being distant some nine leagues from the river. However, as Monsieur Thiton, the Grand Master, has shown me the order which you had sent him on the 15th of November for delivery of the adjudication, I venture to beg you to be so good as to command him not to stand in the way of the

adjudicator's using it, since it is in order, and the delay would be very harmful for me. I dare once again, Monsieur, to entreat you to have some pity for my unfortunate situation, which is far more serious than you can imagine it to be. I am persuaded that the King, who does not ignore for a long time the very unhappy condition in which I am, would wish you to be so good as to refuse to find any difficulty in the way of ten thousand francs more or less in the affair. Such as it is, the only grace and the only benefit of which he has never honoured me, and having done me the honour of assuring me when I took the liberty of demanding it of him, that while he could not do yet he would pay me regularly and preferentially. In God's name, Monsieur, enter with a humane and tender heart into my bitter needs. I dare hope for that mark of your friendship and of your goodness, Monsieur, will do me justice in persuading you that of all the persons being among your friends, there is none who loves and honours you as perfectly as myself,

LOUISE, DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVI

To Desmarests.

British Museum, Additional MSS. 18675 fo 75.

DE PARIS,

ce 22 Sept., 1711.

Comme vous aviés en la bonté, Monsieur, de m'assurer que vous donneriés ordre de me faire resevoyr une anné de la pansion dont le Roy m'onore, jê estê au trêsor royal ché M. Groing etchez M. de Turmenis ; il m'ont assuré, que vous n'an aviés donné du qun à ma faveur, et comme je ne doute poingt que vostre intansion ne soyt de me

faire resovoyt les neuf mille, et fems de livre que vous m'avez fait la grasse de me promestre, et que comme vous aves l'esprit augupé de chose très importante vous pouvés avoyr oublié de pancer a moy, trevés bon ste lestre pour vous an faire souvenir et pour vous suplier instanmant de vouloyr bien anvoyer vos hordre positive pour que je puisse profister de vostre promesse, an ayant, je voos assure, Monsicur, un bessoings infisnes ayés donc cette bonté pour moy, je vous an conjure instanmant. Comme de m'accorder la justisse d'estre bien persuadé, Monsicur, que personne ne vous estime, considère et honore plus parfaitement que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVI

As you have the goodness, Monsieur, to assure me that you will give an order that I should receive one year of the pension with which the King honours me, I went to the Treasury to M. Groing and to M. de Turmenis. They assured me that you had signed nothing in my favour and as I do not doubt that it is not your intention to permit me to receive the nine thousand and as many livres as you have done me the favour to offer me, and that, as your mind is occupied with very important matters you have probably forgotten to think of me, I find it good to write this letter to bring myself to your memory, and to entreat you urgently to be so good as to send your definite orders in order that I may profit by your promise. For I have, Monsieur, as I can well assure you, an infinite need to have that kindness shown to me, and that is what I beg you to do with all speed. Do me the justice of being persuaded, Monsieur, that no one esteems, considers and honours you more perfectly than I.

LOUISE DUCHESS DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVII

To Desmarets.

French National Archives, G, 7543.

DE PARIS,

ce 2 fevrier, 1713.

Je suis bien mortifié, Monsieur, de me trever obligé par la cruelle situation de mais affaire et mon molheureux estat de vous importuner sy souvant pour vous conjurer davoyt la bonté de me faire au moing payer une année de pansion sur selle qui me sont dus. Accordez moy donc, Monsieur, sette marque de bonté et d'amitié de vouloyr bien antrer dans mon extresme besoing et de me faire mestre sur l'estat payé et sancrier qui ne me fasse pas languir. Au veristé, Monsieur, ma consideration pour vous et mon atachement a vous honorer depuis le moment que je eu l'honneur de vous cosnestre, meryterest au peux de protection et de secours dun cœur aussy bien fait et aussy juste que le vostre : ne me refussé donc, Monsieur, la grosse et la justisse que je vous demande instamment, non plus que la justisse destre très fortement persuadé que vous ne lacorderez à personne, qui vous souette plus de bon heur, qui vous honore plus parfaitement, ny qui soyt plus vesristablement, Monsieur, vostre très umble et très obéissante servante que moy.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVII

I am deeply mortified, Monsieur, to find myself obliged, by the cruel situation of my affairs and my unfortunate condition, to importune you so frequently, and to beg you to have the goodness to make me payment of the year's arrear of my pension which is due to me. Accord me, therefore,

Monsieur, this mark of kindness and of friendship, and enter into my extreme necessity, and place me upon the pay list and make it understood that the delay must not continue. In truth, Monsieur, my consideration for you, and my attachment to you since the moment when I first had the honour to know you, merits at least a measure of protection and of assistance from a heart as well meaning and as just as yours. Do not deny me, Monsieur, the grace and the justice which I demand constantly from you, for that justice is very strongly persuaded that you will not accord it to anyone who wishes you more happiness, who honours you more perfectly and who cannot be more truly yours than, Monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant,

LOUISE, DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVIII

To Desmarests.

French National Archives, G, 7543.

DE PARIS,

ce 9 mars 1713.

Je resque toujours, Monsieur, assé malheureuse pour que vous ne veillez j'amais antrer avec un peux de bonté et dumanisté dans ma cruelle sytuassion et dans mais extresme besoins. Je vous avouerez, Monsieur, que la sirconstance ou je me treve mest an des espoyr, et se qui maflige an coure le plus griesvement, soit de cecas prais mestre ossé flater d'un peux de part dans l'honneur de vostre amitié de la doulleur de nan pas resevoyr la moindre petite marque ny de ne vous trever jamais dispossé a entrer dans aucune considerassion pour moy ny de soulager mon malheureux estat et mais extresme bessoing, mestent dus troys années de

la pension dont le Roy me honoré. Au véristé, Monsieur, par lestime et la consideration que jé toujours eu pour vous depuis une jé l'avantage de vous cosnestre, je mestais cru androyt désperer une marque de vos bontés et de vostre justice. Je vous la demande, Monsieur, avec toute lais instance qun très présant besoning le peut exsiger et que vous veilliez bien au moings mordonner une année. Vous me laviez fait éesperer devant le voyage de Fonteneblaux : ne me refusé pas, Monsieur, je vous ansupli, et veillez vous souvenir que je suis une daïs personne du monde qui ayt toujours plus pris de part a vos avantages que qui que se soyt. Ainsi, Monsieur, por l'humanité, sy je ne le puis optenir de vostre amitié, compastissé a ma triste conjuncture on ma cordant la grasse que je vous demande ysy et la justisse an maimé tems de me croyr avec toute la consideration possyble vostre très umble et très obéissante servente.

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XVIII

I risk as ever, Monsieur, to be unfortunate in that you do not wish to enter with a little kindness and humanity into my cruel situation and in my extreme necessity. I confess to you, Monsieur, that the circumstances in which I find myself, lead me to despair, and that which afflicts me still most grievously is that in this case I believed myself to have a part in the honour of your friendship, and the unhappiness of not being able to receive the least little mark nor to find you ever in any way disposed to enter into any consideration for me nor to solace my unhappy estate, and my extreme necessity during the three years of the pension which the King has honoured me with. In truth, Monsieur, by the esteem and consideration which

I have always had for you since I have had the privilege of knowing you, I might believe that I ought to despair of a mark of your goodness and your justice. I ask you, Monsieur, with all the insistence which my very pressing needs demand, that you will look well to the payment of one year's arrears. You have caused me to hope before the journey to Fontainebleau, do not refuse me, Monsieur, I entreat you and remember that I am one of the people in the whole world who has always had your advantages at heart. Thus, Monsieur, for the sake of humanity, if I cannot obtain by reason of your compassionate friendship in my sad position, in the grace which I ask of you, then at least do me the justice of believing me, with all the consideration possible, your very humble and very obedient servant,

LOUISE DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

LETTER XIX

*To the Controleur Général of Finance.*¹

A AUBIGNY,

le 10 decembre 1731.

Permettez moi, Monsieur, de vous prior cette année, comme j'ay fait l'année dernière, de m'estre favorable auprès de Monsieur le Cardinal dans la demande que je luy fait accorder par sa Majesté, et d'une petite augmentation, si celo est possible. Vous trouverez cy-joingt, Monsieur, la copie du memoire que j'ay fait présenter à Monsieur le Cardinal : comme il vous sera apparamment renvoyé, je vous pris de voulloir bien l'appuyer de votre crédit auprès de son Eminence, et de l'engager à m'accorder une demande. Je me flatte par

¹ Philibert Ouy, March, 1730—Dec., 1745.

l'amitié que vous m'avez termoignée que vous voudrez bien me rendre service en cette occasion : et que vous êtes bien persuadé de l'estime et de la considération avec laquelle je suis, Monsieur, votre très—umble et très obéissante servante—

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

In the margin is written : “Bon pour 5,000. Reponde en conformité à Madame de Portsmouth.”

LETTER XIX

Permit me, Monsieur, to entreat you this year, as I did last year, to be favourable towards M. le Cardinal touching the demand which I have been permitted to make to him by grace of His Majesty, and for a little increase if that is possible.

You will find herewith, Monsieur, the copy of the memoir which I have had presented to M. le Cardinal, as he has apparently sent it back to you, I beg you to lean on your standing with His Eminence and to engage him to accord me my demand. I flatter myself by the friendship which you have shown to me, that you will desire to render me this service in this matter, and that you are well persuaded of the esteem and consideration with which I am, Monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant,

L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

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